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previews. **Best reviews.** **Demo CD** *every month.*

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The Official

November 1995 £4.99

The Official PlayStation Magazine

Eight
demos on
EXCLUSIVE
CD!



Exclusive previews!

Spot Goes To Hollywood and Total NBA - stunning!

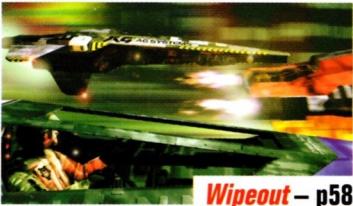
Scanning.

Amazing animation



DiscWorld – p82

Phenomenal video



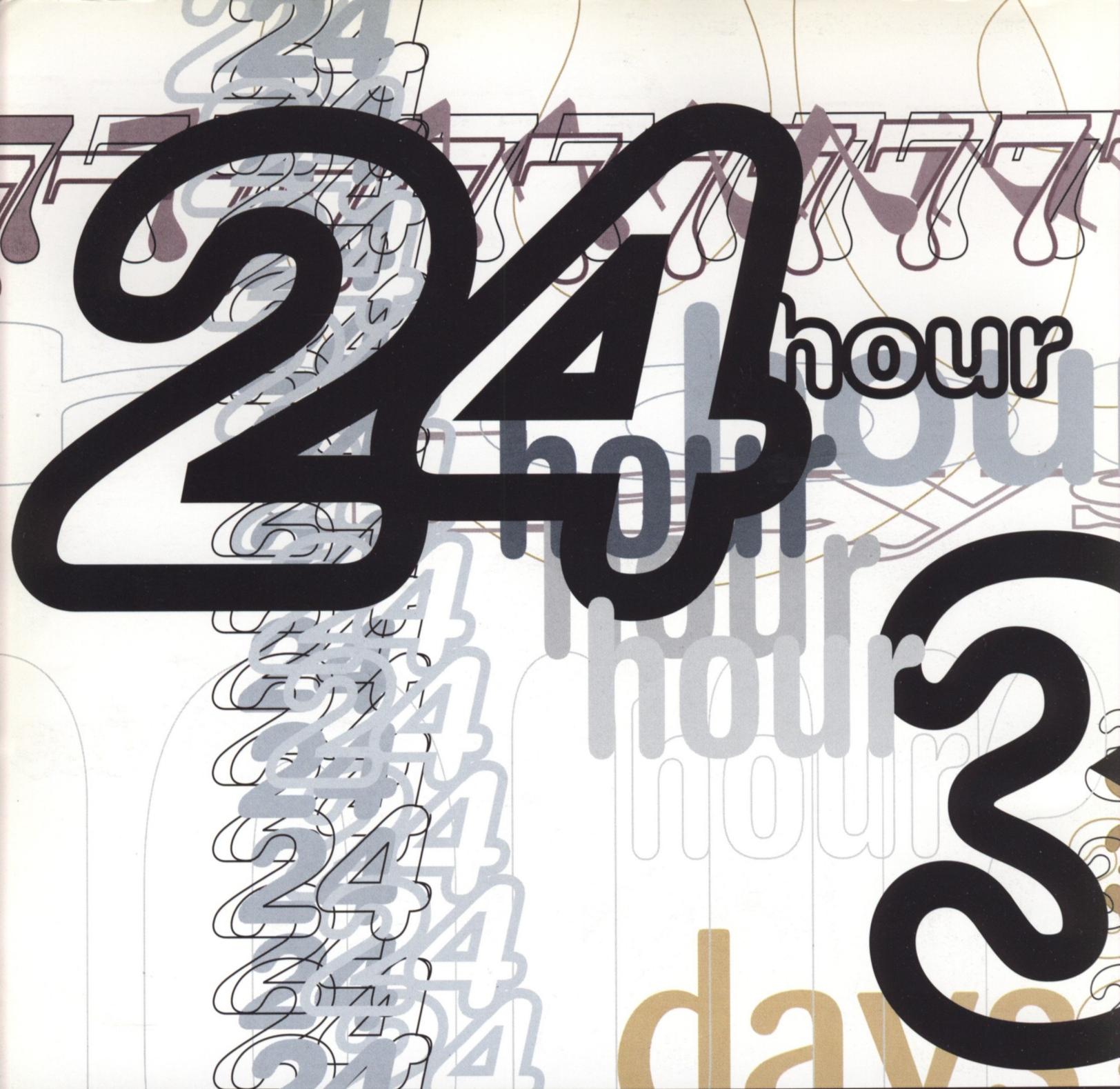
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Awesome 3D graphics



Toshinden – p

On the CD: *Wipeout, Destruction Derby, Assault Rigs, Lemmings 3D, Novastorm, Krazy Ivan, Discworld*. See page 94!



You've got PlayStation. You need advice.

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Welcome to The PlayStation PowerLine – a brand new service dedicated to PlayStation gamers.

Utilising advanced computerised audio text technology, the PowerLine allows you to move around the system – just like a regular computer.

The PowerLine contains game help, hints and tips, technical information, AV advice, set-up advice, software release information and competitions.

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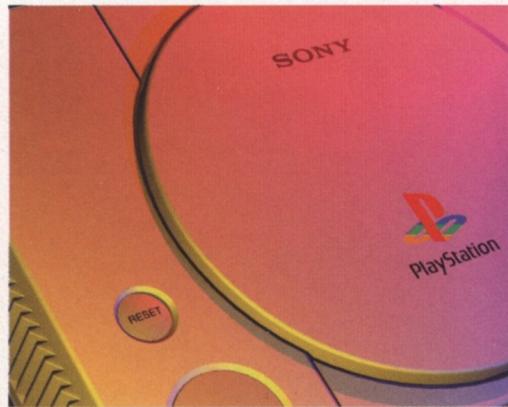
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36 Made In Britain: homegrown videogames

This little rain-swept isle has long been the provider of the best games software IN THE WORLD. PSM takes a sideways glance at some of the PlayStation titles in production, the length and breadth of our green 'n' pleasant land.



46 The A to Z of gaming

If you can't tell a sprite from a polygon, and think parallax scrolling is an ambient rave band, think on. To decipher our ramblings, you need a Lexicon Of Gaming Terminology.



48 Two grand's worth of TV

To celebrate the auspicious opening of this shrine to PlayStation, Sony has donated an awesome widescreen TV. £2,000 worth of PALplus Dolby surround, mate.



58 The reviews start here

Come on, let's face it. This is what you've bought the mag for – the reviews. Nestling quietly towards the back of the magazine are reviews of no fewer than 17 PlayStation titles. Star billing goes to *Ridge Racer* (of course), *Battle Arena Toshinden*, *Jumping Flash*, *Wipeout* and *NBA Jam*. Get stuck in.

8 The biggest hardware launch of the decade!

Get 'em while they're hot! PlayStation is selling out across the world – over 100,000 machines sold in two days in the US, and Europe is set to do the same. Learn about the machine, the marketing and the men behind Sony's biggest launch since the Walkman.

Greetings! And welcome to the first edition of *The Official PlayStation Magazine*. Not the snappiest title of all time, but factually correct if nothing else. Our close links with Sony Computer Entertainment mean that we have direct, mainline information on the hottest new PlayStation titles. We won't be harping on about obscure games you can only buy in Japan (well, only a bit anyway). We're dedicated to supporting all the gamers that have bought UK PlayStations – and to doing it better than anyone else. I reckon we're not far off.

You may also have noticed a black thing taped to the mag. This is the first of our monthly demo CDs sporting a selection of demos, videos and pics for the PlayStation. After all, it's okay reading about new games, but it's not the same as a bit of hands-on, is it? Feel happy: you have now entered the next generation.

Steve Jarratt (Editor)

Power plays



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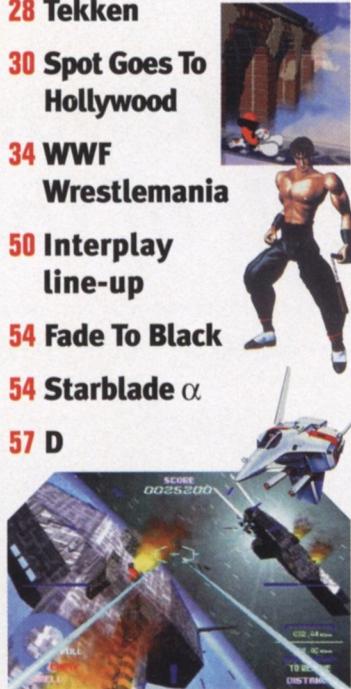
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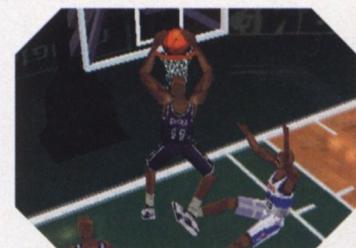
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The Official PlayStation Magazine CD - number 1

This issue's cover CD bears the fruits of Sony Interactive Studio's (the artists formerly known as Psygnosis) efforts over the last two years. We have rolling demos of *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby*, plus fully playable snippets from *Lemmings 3D*, *Discworld* and *Novastorm*. There's also a new version of the V-CD light show, based on the PlayStation pack-in Demo Disc program. And finally we have two stunning video sequences from *Krazy Ivan* and *Assault Rigs*, with a couple of screenshots thrown in for good measure. Enjoy...



The Official
PlayStation
Magazine

SONY
COMPUTER
ENTERTAINMENT



On the CD

Update

The biggest hardware launch of the decade

PlayStation hits 100,000 US sales in first weekend

September 9 was the largest day in the history of the videogame industry, proclaimed Sony Computer Entertainment America. After months of hype, gossip and leaked tech-specs, Sony's machine hit the US on September 9 – and sold over 100,000 units in just two days.

An impressive number, made even more significant when you consider that Sony has sold more PlayStations in two days than Sega has shifted Saturns in four months.

The PlayStation is being sold in around 15,000 key retail outlets in the US, many of whom are experiencing over 90 percent sell-through – practically all of their stock has gone in just 48 hours.

According to Sony, many of these stores have also reported that the total software to hardware ratio has exceeded 1.5 to 1 (basically, for every two machines sold, they're flogging three games as well). This is causing significant out-of-stock positions on many software titles, including *Battle Arena Toshinden*, *Ridge Racer*, *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition*, and *ESPN Extreme Games*.

Sony has arrived, and the videogame market will never be the same. We take an inside view of the machine, the marketing and the men behind PlayStation

At long last, the UK version of the PlayStation has arrived. 'Sony's biggest launch since the Walkman' sees its new 32-bit games machine launched into hundreds of stores up and down the country.

At just £299 including a joypad, RF lead and in-pack demo CD, the PlayStation is in a prime position to become the next generation machine, beating off competition from Sega and 3DO. But to make sure this happens, Sony Computer Entertainment (SCE) – the division set up *solely* to handle the PlayStation's affairs – is spending some £20 million on marketing the PlayStation between now and Christmas. If you haven't heard much about the machine up until now, you will soon.

Promotional strategy

Part of SCE's battleplan is to increase brand awareness and credibility; as a departure from the usual school of videogame marketing, ads are appearing in over 40 fashion, music and style mags such as *Dazed And Confused*, *The Face* and *Ikon*, while PlayStations are making regular appearances at night clubs, rock festivals, celeb parties and other hip venues. No doubt the likes of Damon, Jarvis and Whigfield will soon be rubbing shoulders with members the PSM team, lucky swines.

Just in case you miss them – doubtful, though that is – the press ads feature a slick composite image of someone playing PlayStation while their head explodes. Obviously, this is meant to suggest that the limits of your



imagination, preconceived ideas about videogaming, and the horizons of your experience will be expanded at a violent rate. And not that your head will actually shatter into fleshy chunks.

Later in the year, SCE's marketing machine really kicks into gear with the launch of a nationwide television ad campaign. The ads were shot at

At last. Here it is in all its glory. After five years of research and hundreds of millions of dollars, Sony is now a major player in the videogame market. With successful launches in Japan and the US, it now only remains to be seen how the PlayStation fares in the UK and Europe. PSM reckons 'pretty bloody well'.

Shepperton Studios during August, and PSM was there to see them happen. SCE has commissioned seven adverts of varying lengths to run from 6 October, every day until Christmas. The theme of the ads is a strange government agency – very much in the vein of UNCLE from the TV show – called SAPS: Society Against PlayStation. Spokesman for

■ SONY'S MARKETING PLANS:	p9	■ THE MAKING OF PLAYSTATION:	p10	■ EARLY DESIGNS:	p11
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1 **Dwight P. Dibbley (Robert Stanton) – representative of SAPS: Society Against PlayStation.**
2 **Dwight examines the harmful effects of PlayStation through darkened goggles in a reinforced bunker. With rubber gloves on.**
3 **Hmm, perhaps the safety glass could have been a tad thicker...**



SAPS, one Dwight P. Dibbley, suggests that the PlayStation is not only immoral but positively dangerous, highlighting the deleterious effects of exposure to PlayStation games – like people turning into chimps or, more ominously, losing pride in their personal appearance.

The commercials were directed by **Mark Tiedermann**, from Brooklyn, New York, who had nothing but admiration for the project: 'The whole concept of the anti-self is something that is seen in the US. This is dead-on... I think kids are gonna love it, and I think it's speaking to them as intelligent human beings, instead of telling them what to buy because it's the coolest cool. Let them figure out if it's cool or not.'

Tiedermann started out editing music videos, and has worked for PM Dawn and Prince: 'I went on tour as Prince's music video editor', he claims proudly. He's also a self-confessed videogame junkie, often ending up in arcades in between flights; but the Sony ad shoot looked even more gruelling

than being one of 'symbol's' entourage: 'We've had a tight schedule and we've had to work with animals,' he says, smiling ruefully. 'We ended up working with the only chimp available in England. There's only one chimp that is even remotely trained to do this – so it's a good business to get into, they charge a fortune for him! He actually had very little experience, but worked very well.'

Though not quite on the same scale as some of the more extravagant TV ads, the PlayStation campaign is sufficiently complex and time-consuming. 'One of the tough things that we're doing is going with fairly long takes,' explains Tiedermann. 'We have tracking shots where we're actually passing through walls, and there's a fair amount of choreography. At one point in the arcade we have 30 kids walking around and doing different things, then Dwight pops up and shows the product, all in one shot. The choreography of that takes a great deal of time.'

The man in question is Robert

Stanton, a bit-part actor whose bits keep on getting bigger, so to speak. After playing one of *Bob Roberts'* aides, he's been Dennis' dad in, um, *Dennis*. Stanton's also currently in the middle of shooting *Central Park West* for US TV and is soon to be bagman to Burt Reynolds' lecherous, dipsomaniacal politician in Demi Moore's *Striptease*. He's also excellent as the humourless SAPS agent, with deadpan delivery and a suit that Robert Vughn would've killed for. No doubt you'll be seeing a lot more of agent Dibbley on TV and in the pages of *PSM*.

Of course while a monster ad campaign is a Good Thing, there's no better way of spreading the word than by giving people hands-on experience of the hardware in action. PlayStations will be located in major shopping malls up and down the country, and the ubiquitous roadshow will be plying its wares at resorts and public events. SCE reckons at least 150,000 people will have played with its hardware during the course of the crusade.

With the full weight of this promotional effort, it should come as no surprise to hear that Sony's intention is to sell 175,000 units in the UK by March '96, and one million across Europe by next September. It also intends to shift three games for every PlayStation bought by the end of '95 – so if you only figure on buying two, you're messing up Sony's plans.

The PAL PlayStation

To the outside world, the UK machine is identical to the Japanese and US machines, although the joypads have been increased to accommodate sizeable western paws, and the leads are mercifully longer.

The major difference between machines is in the letterbox display which the PAL machine is forced to display, leaving small black borders top and bottom. While every effort is now being made to code PAL-specific titles which will run full screen, early games are ported versions of Japanese titles. These games are designed to run on NTSC-standard TVs, which consist of 525 horizontal lines; the UK's PAL (Phase Alternate Line) system has 625

Official Pricings

Now that retailers are stocking up their shelves with PlayStation titles at a blinding rate, there's going to be a staggering wealth of differing prices floating around and it's going to get confusing. So, if you are ever in doubt about the price of software, here's the definitive list of RRP's from Sony just so you can be sure.

September

Toshinden	£44.99
Ridge Racer	£44.99
Kileak The Blood	£39.99
Rapid Reload	£39.99
Lemmings 3D	£39.99
Novastorm	£39.99
Wipeout	£44.99
Jumping Flash	£44.99

October

Air Combat	£44.99
CyberSled	£39.99
Mortal Kombat 3	£49.99
Discworld	£39.99
Destruction Derby	£44.99

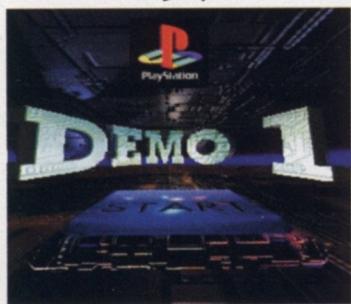
November

Tekken	£49.99
Starblade α	£39.99
Krazy Ivan	£44.99
Twisted Metal	£44.99
Philosoma	£39.99
Assault Rigs	£44.99
ESPN Extreme Sports	£44.99

Hardware and Peripherals

PlayStation (with RF cable & demo disc)	£299
Controller/joypad	£24.99
Memory card	£19.99
Link cable	£19.99
PlayStation mouse	£24.99
NegCon	£44.99
Euro AV Cable	£34.99
ASCII Pad	£29.99
ASCII Stick	£49.99

The very first thing you'll be playing...



Demo 1 – the PlayStation's pack-in CD – carries a variety of technical demonstrations (like the T-Rex and manta), plus demos of games like *Total NBA '96*, *Wipeout* and *Battle Arena Toshinden*. Top stuff.

News

Top 10

PSM's Top 10 list of PlayStation games we're looking forward to...

- 1) *Tekken* (SCE/Namco). A God among games and possibly the best beat 'em up of all time.
- 2) *Mortal Kombat III* (SCE/Williams). The other best beat 'em up, ever.
- 3) *Darkstalkers* (Capcom). In the absence of a decent *Street Fighter II*, we'll have this, ta.
- 4) *Doom* (GT Interactive). A stonking conversion of the blood 'n' guts maze shooter. Classic.
- 5) *Total NBA '96* (SCE). You can almost hear the squeak of trainer on polished wood. Ah, apparently you can.
- 6) *Syndicate Wars* (Bullfrog). Excellent tactical shoot 'em up gameplay with spiffy new graphics.
- 7) *Magic Carpet* (EA/Bullfrog). We're intrigued to see how this 3D Pentium PC-buster fares on the PlayStation.
- 8) *Tenka* (SIE). State-of-the-art first-person walk around blaster from the clever chaps in the 'pool.
- 9) *Spot Goes To Hollywood* (Virgin). This glitzy platformer is drop-dead gorgeous – and absolutely huge.
- 10) *FIFA Soccer '96* (EA). Potentially the slickest footie game since the dawn of man. Perhaps.

→ lines, so the UK machine has to display 50 lines of black, 525 lines of the game screen, and then another 50 lines of black, hence the squashed, 'widescreen'-style image.

However, games coded in the UK, such as *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby*, manage to keep the borders to a minimum and, you'll be pleased to hear, speed differences are negligible.

Inside the cardboard packaging, you'll also find Sony's Demo CD, packed to the pits with playable game clips, preview video footage and some impressive demonstrations of the PlayStation's processing power. There are four playable segments from *Battle Arena Toshinden* (three characters), *Wipeout* (one full track), *Destruction Derby* (arena play) and *Gremlin's Loaded* (one whole level).

There's also a realtime but unplayable demo of *Total NBA '96* – SCE's stunning new basketball game which is previewed in depth on page 20 and on our own Demo Disc. Other non-interactive preview footage features the visual glories of *Tekken*, *Starblade α*, *Ridge Racer*, *Rapid Reload*, *Jumping Flash*, *Warhawk* and *Twisted Metal*.

As is becoming commonplace, the demo CD also contains a light show which pulses and animates in time to music: just slap an audio disc into the drive and chill out as the screen echoes the mood and rhythm of the music. One might suggest this sort of feature is better under the influence of, say, alcohol, but that might be construed as condoning such activities. And far be it from us to ever have fun.

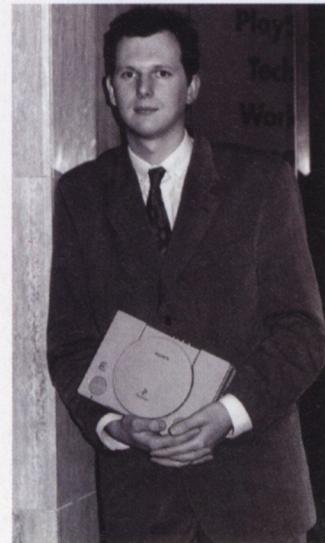
Finally, and most impressively, there are two demos of the PlayStation's trouser-splitting hardware. The first is a manta ray swimming majestically amid a shoal of fish, and the second is the near-legendary T-rex demo. This texture-



Our hero. Inventor of PlayStation and home cinema freak, Ken Kutaragi. Sony's director and general manager of the Japanese R&D division has been with the company for around 20 years. [Inset] Kutaragi-san, holding his invention – the PlayStation's super-powerful circuit board.



→ Another gratuitous shot of the sexiest console in the land. → Namco's commitment to PlayStation even extends to a twisty analogue joypad called 'Negcon'.



Phil Harrison, Communications Director of SCE. Phil gets PSM's 'Top Fellah' prize for wrapping his new TV round a tree. And living.

mapped tyrant of *Jurassic Park* strides along, opens his mouth, blinks, smiles and moves his head – all in realtime and all under your control. If you really want to impress your 16-bit-owning chums, stick this on and watch in glee as their chins get carpet burn.

The making of PlayStation

The PlayStation project began a full five years ago, during which time Sony has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in making sure its machine is neater, more powerful, easier to program and cheaper than anyone else's – and it looks like it's succeeded. Admittedly, for an officially branded magazine, we would say that; but we've been in a position to play all the other games machines and PlayStation is by far the most impressive – visually, aurally and from a purely aesthetic 'sexy joypads' point of view.

However, the first seeds of Sony's involvement in interactive 3D graphics were planted in 1983, during development of a product called System G – a realtime 3D graphic effects system for professional broadcasting. This was the culmination of lots of different research projects into broadcast and digital processing, and the first tangible results of 20-odd years of work.

System G represented the first time that broadcasters were offered the ability to manipulate graphics in real time for live broadcast: a major landmark, as previous systems – such as Quantel – relied on prerecorded

sequences which were animated a frame at a time and then edited together.

One of the prime motivators and the credited inventor of PlayStation is Ken Kutaragi – electronics guru and self-confessed home entertainment fanatic. The mild-mannered director and general manager of SCE's R&D division in Japan has been with Sony for 20 years and helped design many of the components that lurk beneath the PlayStation's cool grey exterior. Kutaragi joined the System G project in 1985, based at Sony Corporation's corporate research labs.

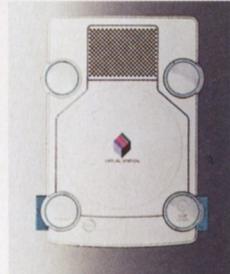
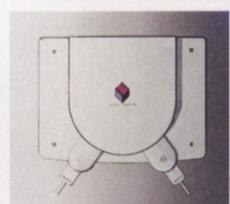
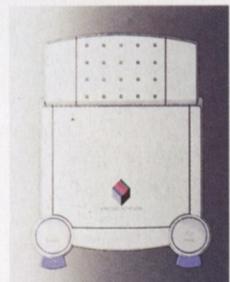
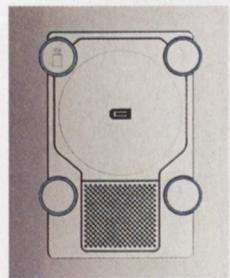
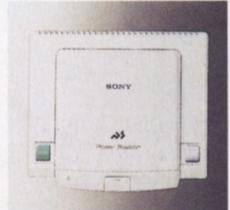
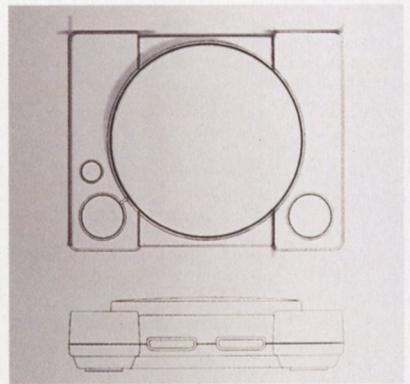
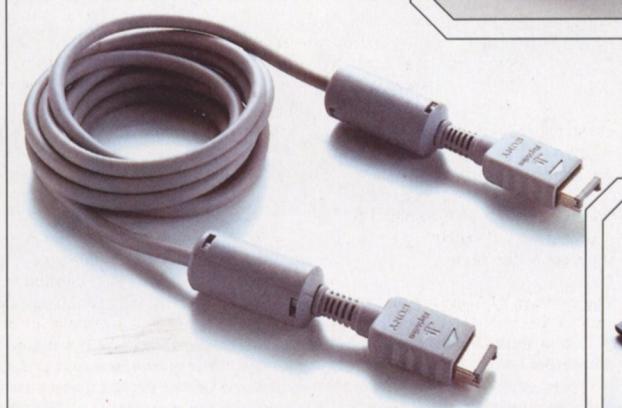
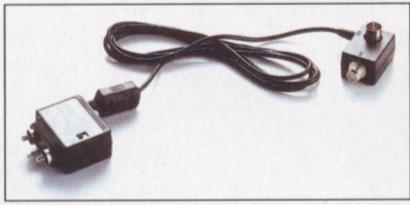
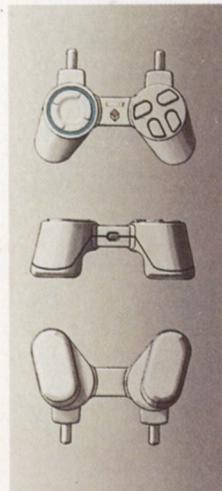
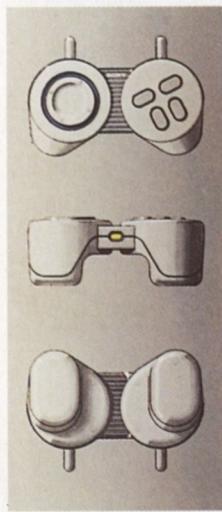
As the System G project drew to a close, Kutaragi and his team considered how the technology might be used in a different application, and before long their thoughts turned to a games machine with superior 3D graphics capabilities. 'The original idea was to make a synthesizer for graphics,' he states, 'something that takes a basic graphic and then adds various effects to it quickly and easily. I wanted to develop a machine capable of displaying subtle effects without difficulty. We achieved that.'

After several years of planning and pre-production, the PlayStation project began in earnest in 1990 – at which point the team doubled from five people to ten, swelled by the addition of dedicated chip designers and hardware specialists. By the time the hardware was completed in 1993, the team comprised around 50 people.

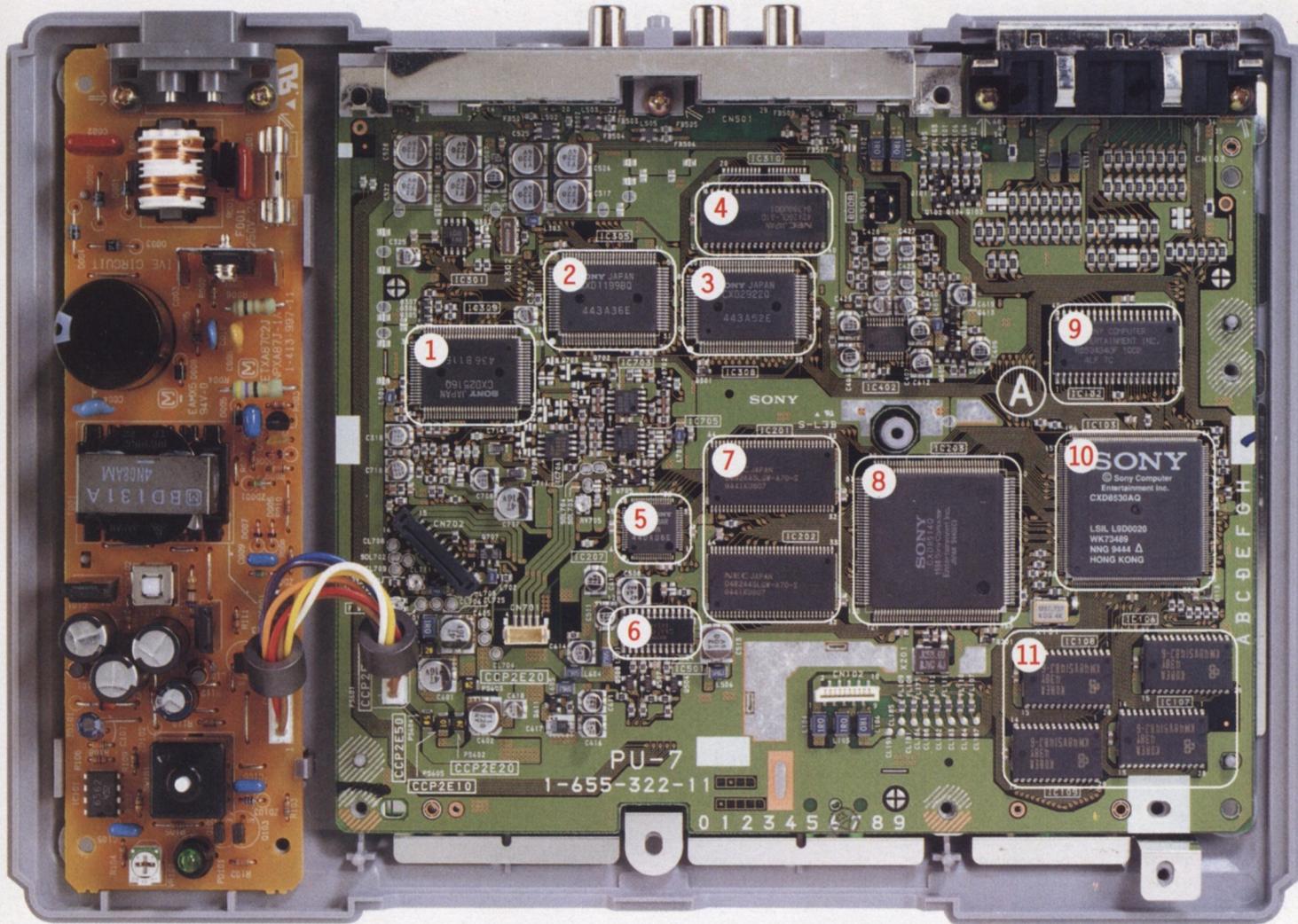
The PlayStation's technical



From concept to console...



The drawings around the outside of this page are the original never-before-seen concept sketches from the Sony Corporation Design Centre. You can see how the design evolved into the sleek case pictured directly above. The photo on the right shows all the pre-production joypads that were constructed to make sure the final unit was absolutely bang-on. The central montage shows the current range of add-ons (clockwise, from top left) extra joypad, Negcon, memory card, Scart lead, mouse, link-up cable and standard RF lead.



To stop you taking your PlayStation apart, this is what the bits do: (1) Processes the signals from the CD. (2) Sorts out all the different stuff that comes off CD at the same time. (3) Generates sound effects and music. (4) 512K of memory to hold sound data. (5) Fiddles with the sound signal. (6) Sends the picture to the TV. (7) Stores video images in 1Mb of RAM. (8) Handles the stuff that's drawn on screen. (9) Kick-starts the system. (10) The CPU, which contains the brilliant 3D graphics chip and video playback hardware. (11) Holds game data in 2Mb of RAM.

specification was finalised at the end of 1993, and the hardware design and manufacturing design was completed during 1994.

'Our objective was a high-performance, low-price videogames system, which was easy to write games for,' says Kutaragi-san. 'We wanted to get many software companies creating games and so we had to design a very small and very sophisticated operating system and develop software libraries to help programmers. This enabled programmers to create games quickly and easily and also allowed them to write high-quality games in a short period. Those three things were the most difficult to get right.'

An unsung factor in the whole development process is in building the thing for a cheap enough price. Anyone

can design a machine with a fantastic performance: bringing it to market with a price tag people can actually afford... that's the real trick. Mass manufacture production is a real speciality: there's a whole skill and science related to designing chips that you can make cheaply enough with a high enough reliability. In that respect, Sony's engineers seem to have done a better job than the competition: PlayStation's nearest rival is £100 more expensive.

Sony did benefit from having the bulk of the chip development handled in-house. All the PlayStation's chips were designed by Sony engineers, although a few of them – such as the R3000 RISC CPU (which is manufactured under licence by Sony) – were modified from an existing design.

With the hardware specification

finalised, the job of designing the look of PlayStation fell to a Mr Goto at the Sony Corporation Design Centre, a central ergonomic design repository for the entire company.

With over 450 licensees signed up to write PlayStation games, it looks like Kutaragi-san and his team have made the machine everyone wants a part of. But like all consoles, it takes time to get the most from the hardware, a fact of which Ken and his team are aware: 'We continue to have software engineers write new libraries to exploit the hardware in new and exciting ways,' he says. 'But we are developing innovative libraries which will push the hardware even more than you have seen so far. And who knows where hardware of such sophistication will go?'

Where indeed.



US Column

PSM's man across The Pond has all the latest on PlayStation events Stateside. Warning: some of these games may never appear in the UK!

12.00am, September 9. PlayStation has just launched in the US. Not since the first Space Shuttle expedition has a hardware launch generated such excitement (I say the first expedition, because even the Yanks don't give a toss about the Shuttle any more).

12.01am. Early indications would seem to suggest that Sony has achieved its initial objective. With US retailers boasting advanced PlayStation orders in excess of 100,000 units, Sony can be forgiven the brag that its 32-bit competition is already beaten.

So how come initial support of PlayStation has been so strong? There are three main reasons: 1) Electronics Boutique, the US's leading specialist games store, has been offering a high-profile, trade-in deal to get a 'free' PlayStation. Simply hand in 30 old games cartridges (unsurprisingly, Sega Mega CD discs don't count), and a shiny new PlayStation is yours. 2) Sony's marketing drive has been kicking in over the last few months, with a back-to-basics, 'these are the games - aren't they cool' kinda approach. 3) Many US magazines have been talking non-stop about PlayStation for a whole year, and unlike Sega's surprise launch, Sony has stuck to its original battle plan and built up the hype steadily.

PlayStation sells for \$299 in the US, with no pack-in game. Soon, *Ridge Racer* will be bundled with the hardware (although this new deal will be accompanied by a price hike to \$349). *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer* are, predictably, the main crowd pleasers, with gamers (so far) seeming to rate the pair above Sega Saturn's *Virtua Fighter/Daytona USA* combo. US gamers are also surprisingly well informed about what PlayStation games are in the pipeline - *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby* are eagerly anticipated. There is also an enormous amount of home-grown titles waiting in the wings, including EA's massively popular sports games.

Indeed just because this is the country that brought you artificial 'cheese' and Lorena Bobbit, don't think we don't know our games. This awareness is probably due to the internet. In *The Land Of The Free* (phone calls), practically everybody is on the net. Well, at least 15 per cent of the core gamers - and these are the guys that form opinions. The internet has been buzzing with word of PlayStation for months, and there are many dedicated PlayStation sites already established. Maybe in a future column we can take some space out to list the best of these, and maybe the wired among you can start some Anglo-American relations. (Just don't ever intimate that America is violent/crass/a bad place to be - Americans don't like it much.)

Whatever, the fact is that PlayStation is here, it looks tastier than a honey-dipped Cindy Crawford and is selling faster than camcorders on the day Kim Basinger takes up nude jogging. [Hmm... - PSM.]

Sporting chance

Soon you won't be able to watch, eat, or read anything without the PlayStation logo belting you clean in the face in some clever marketing ploy. You can't even watch the boxing now without the familiar branding staring out at you from the crotch of international super bantamweight champion Prince Naseem Hamed (right).

That's right, in a major sponsorship deal announced recently, Sony is proud to confirm that the acclaimed boxer will be endorsing PlayStation by ditching his familiar leopard skin shorts for a reserved black pair emblazoned with the PS logo. The deal is rumoured to be worth a fair bundle, although Sony has not confirmed an amount, and sees the Prince Naseem wearing the new get-up for four of his forthcoming fights.

In addition, sporting chance Sony has also tied up a deal with World Superbike Champion Carl Fogarty (below), sponsoring the rider to promote the machine both on and off the track.



'Foggy's' words on the matter were, 'I'm delighted to be associated with the PlayStation - power to the PlayStation'. Absolutely!

Then, not taking this sporting thing lightly, Sony will be sponsoring the hip 'n' trendy Extreme In-Line Championships this October. Apparently it's the most aggressive in-line skating you're likely to see under one roof, and Sony will be there in force.

So no matter what you're planning on doing, you can bet your last banana that the PlayStation logo is going to be very close by.



TV listings

Sitting comfortably? Prepare to be interactively entertained. Terrestrial and satellite TV channels are currently broadcasting seven computer games-related shows. The Channel 4 stalwart *GamesMaster*, now on its fifth run, appears every Thursday at 6.30pm, while ITV's *Bad Influence* slots in on Wednesdays at 5.15pm.

Dishular delights, too. TCC (The Children's Channel, as if you didn't know) plugs in *Cybernet* on Saturdays, repeating twice over the weekend. And the quaintly and indeed amusingly monikered *Fish 'n' Chips* appears on Tuesdays and Thursdays on Nickelodeon. Look out also for Channel One's *Interactive* which repeats every day except Mondays and Tuesdays.

PSM's bedraggled editor has already had his grisly visage splattered all over BBC1's *Total Reality*, so do be on the lookout for other members of the team - and try to switch off as quickly as possible to avoid discomfort.

GamesMaster
Every Thursday at 6.30pm, Channel Four.

Bad Influence
Every Wednesday at 4.45pm, ITV.

Reactive
Weekdays, 4.20pm, BBC.

Movies, Games And Videos
Saturday lunchtime, ITV, times vary through the regions.

Cybernet
Every Saturday morning at 9.30am, repeated Sunday at 9.30am and 1.30pm, The Children's Channel (TCC).

Fish 'n' Chips
Tuesdays and Thursdays 6.30pm, omnibus Saturday 11.30am, Nickelodeon (satellite).

Interactive
Repeated showings every day (except Monday and Tuesday), times vary, Channel 1 (satellite).

Power To The People

Sony Computer Entertainment recently announced the launch of a customer on-line service for PlayStation users. Called PlayStation PowerLine, the service went active at the beginning of September to feed consumers' hunger for up-to-the-minute information on everything regarding the new console.

Contactable on 0881 505-505, the telephone help-line utilises a lower tariff than is the norm for automated services of this kind, charging customers at 39p per minute during peak rate and 25p per minute at all other times. PowerLine will be in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and features services covering a wide range of topics including technical specifications, club information, new release updates, hints and tips on both hardware and software, as well as all the latest news and advice on setting up your machine.

Tekken its time

Namco's Tekken 2 coin-op contains a particularly smart-arse time-release feature, which introduces new characters over a period of time to maintain player interest. Regular arcade goers will find up to 15 new characters available to control over a 20-week period, eliminating the need to perform manual upgrades via plug-in chips of DIP-switching.

Tekken 2 is an upgraded version of **Tekken** (previewed this issue), with new moves and two new characters. A PlayStation version is in the pipeline for release - oh, well into '96 at least - but it's unlikely the time-release thingy will be included.



PlayStation stars at ECTS show

The European Computer Trade Show at Olympia

played host to the official unveiling of the UK PlayStation



Stars of ECTS [from top] *Actua Golf* [Gremlin] - a spookily realistic golf sim. *Actua Soccer* [Gremlin] with motion-captured animation. *Doom* [ID Interactive]. The PlayStation version boasts extra levels and dynamic lighting effects. And an enhanced *Alone In The Dark* [Infogrames] for PlayStation.

Mid September saw the onset of the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS), the bi-yearly gathering of software houses, distributors, retailers, and a vast gaggle of specialist and mainstream journalists at London's Olympia. Unsurprising to most - like the modest Sony stand gobbling up one whole end of Olympia's main hall - the PlayStation itself practically stole the show.

To be perfectly honest there wasn't that much being exhibited that *PSM* hasn't already seen, bar a couple of unveilings from GT and Electronic Arts. Much of the product has been promised on release schedules for a number of months and ECTS merely gave proof to their existence. On the positive side, though, the general trend seemed to lean towards major announcements coming in the new year.

What we did manage to see for the first time was the hotly tipped *Doom* from American developers ID, distributed here in the UK by GT Interactive. Already a storming success on the PC with conversions imminent on other platforms such as the Super Nintendo, *Doom* made its debut on the PlayStation. And blinding it is too.

Viewed from a first-person perspective *Doom* is an astounding 3D shoot 'em up, with violence and gore a-plenty. For PC fans it has astounded them with its hectic gameplay, fantastic graphics and effects, as well as frantically compelling gameplay - it truly is a modern day classic. And its conversion to the PlayStation is as sweet as they come, making use of the machine's ability to generate fast, fluid

3D graphics as well as its crisp audio capabilities. This is one to watch out for.

Sony Interactive Entertainment was on fine form. In between its development PlayStations overheating, both *Krazy Ivan* and the forthcoming *Tenka* were up and running. But the real treat had to be an extremely early viewing of *Urban Decay*, an orgasmic 3D shoot 'em up with some of the most impressive polygon sprites ever to grace the small screen.

Another impressive little gem was *Wing Commander III* developed by Origin and distributed by Electronic Arts. Again another PC conversion, this space-based shoot 'em up is hotly tipped to make major waves when it hits the PlayStation at Christmas. You may be familiar with this title - it was one of the first games to feature a lengthy FMV movie in between game sections and starred none other than Mark Hamill of *Star Wars* fame. In addition, work in progress film footage was also on show of *Wing Commander IV* which stars the same cast and should see a launch toward the latter end of 1996.

Acclaim had one of its big licences on show, *WWF: Wrestlemania* (See PrePlay on Page 34), while Infogrames was proud to show off its graphically enhanced *Alone In The Dark* PC conversion. Gremlin Interactive had both *Actua* titles on show, *Golf* and *Soccer*, while Empire loudly pushed its stunning new pinball game *Pro Pinball*, an amazing SGI title with phenomenal fluidity and an authentic feel.

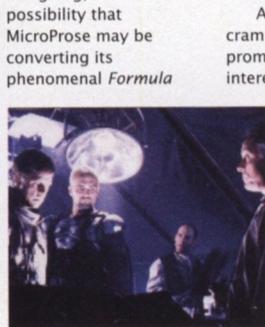
From in the rumour mill there are a number of 'secret' titles from Ocean on their way and *PSM* has it on good authority that they're actually very intriguing, there's the possibility that MicroProse may be converting its phenomenal *Formula*



ECTS at Olympia was dominated by that logo. [Inset] Some of the artwork adorning SCE's mammoth stand.

One Grand Prix 2 sometime next year, and British developer D.I.D. is thinking about converting its accurate *TFX: EF2000* flight sim towards the end of next year (note that this flight sim is so accurate the Ministry of Defence is planning to use the engine in training sims for the RAF).

And that was it. Exhausting, crammed, and incredibly promising; it's going to be an interesting six months...



[From left] It's fair to say that PlayStation (and Sony) stole the show. SCE's Phil Harrison sitting on the slightly-bigger-than-anticipated PAL machine. Two shots of the filming for Origin's lavish *Wing Commander IV*.

Japanese Column

Our Tokyo correspondent gives you a cross-section of the latest games to make waves in the land of the rising Yen. Warning: some of these games may never appear in the UK!

Latest software to appear in the Akihabara district of downtown Tokyo (videogaming heaven) is *Boxer's Road*. This pugilistic punch-up scored amazing marks in the Japanese press, most notably with *Famicom Tsushin* who loved it. But while it obviously hit a nerve with the oriental gaming community, we can report that it ain't so hot. Takes all sorts.

Bandai continue their love affair with clanging great mobile-suits in *ZXE-D: Legend Of Plasmalite*. *ZXE-D* (Zero Exertion, apparently) is a realtime 3D combat game using the now-statutory Gouraud-shaded characters. The suits were designed by famous Japanese illustrator, Mr. Yokoyama (responsible for the *Kileak* mobile suit and the robots from SquareSoft's *Front Mission*). Unusually, the CD is to be released with one of four plastic toy suits, each around 15cm high. These plug into the memory card slot of the PlayStation and record the mobile-suit configuration of the player, his experience level and high scores.

More mobile-suitage mayhem is due any day now in the shape of *Wolf Fang* from Xing. Based on the ageing Data East combat coin-op *Wolf Fang* features more Meka – the Japanese term for mobile-suits and combat robots. Before each fight, players have to select three body parts (torso/head, legs and arms), each of which affects the robot's mobility, strength and attack power. Your choice also determines which weaponry you have at your disposal. Sounds interesting.

Xing's In the Hunt is a conversion of the Irem sub-aquatic *R-Type* game, a horizontally scrolling shooter which takes place on and under the ocean. A husband and wife submarine crew are sent to destroy the atomic 'Yugusu Kyure' weapons of the evil D.A.S. organisation which threaten the world's major cities. The sub is split into two sections piloted respectively by Mr and Mrs Takahara. The PlayStation version should be on sale about now.

One of the biggies to watch out for is Capcom's *Biohazard* – a horror adventure polygon game, and one of many due over the coming months. *Biohazard* takes the theme of a bacterial disaster, a topic which was made very popular among the Japanese following the cracking Dustin Hoffman movie *Outbreak*.

A crack STARS (Special Tactics And Rescue Service) team are sent in to a sleepy mid-Western town to investigate a series of grisly murders. It is promptly attacked by massive killer dogs with a taste for blood and an apparent disregard for bullets. The remaining teamsters take refuge in a huge mansion and yes, you've guessed it, this is where the real action takes place.

You control one of two agents (pilot/marksmen or bomb specialist), and the game has two different plotlines depending who you choose. En route to safety, your character confronts huge snakes, spiders and a variety of zombies. The graphics look well tasty and hopes are high for something of a renaissance in Capcom's ailing fortunes.

Time to sign off, but a few last words about *Horned Owl* from SCE in Japan, a first-person shoot 'em up with some amazing graphics. Oh, and a little thing called *Toshinden 2* – but more on these in a future issue!

Konami's hard sell

After the surreal antics of *Parodius* (reviewed this issue), Konami's next foray into the world of PlayStation is the decidedly more sensible *Goal Storm*. Based on the Japanese title *J-League Winning Eleven*, this polygon soccer sim will be hitting the stores around November.

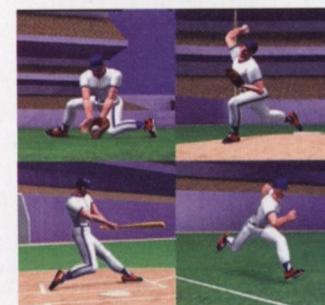
The game appeared in Japan on July 21 with 180,000 pre-orders. It sold 100,000 copies in four days (this is just the PlayStation, remember) and already Konami have received 20,000 re-orders. So by the time you read this, *J-League Winning Eleven* will have shifted over 200,000 units. Yikes.

More sportiness is on offer in the shape of an officially licensed MLBPA (Major League Baseball Player's Association) baseball game. This as-yet-unnamed bat 'n' ball sim uses the same intuitive game engine as Konami's recently released *Powerful Pro Baseball* on the Super Nintendo. It also utilises motion capture technology to generate fluid, realistic movements of the players both batting and on the field. And if that's not enough, just consider that there will also be a four-player multi-tap option available.

Like its baseball counterpart, Konami's forthcoming NFL (National Football League) game is also officially licensed and features many of the same features as its sporting brethren.



Konami's top-selling *J-League Winning Eleven*, soon to appear here as *Goal Storm*.



Konami are intent on shuffling off their cutesy-character image with a brace of rock hard sports titles.

Coded by the original programmer of the classic *John Madden Football*, Konami's *NFL* (working title only) looks set to be one hell of a game. Again, *NFL* makes use of motion capture technology, bringing the on-screen players to life with frightening realism.

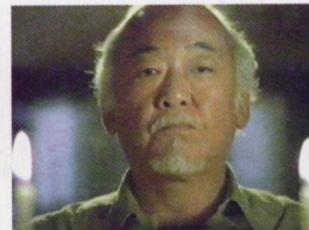
Slightly further into the future is *Project Overkill*, an isometric-view blaster of the 'wanton destruction' variety. *Project Overkill* resembles the old Williams arcade game *Smash TV*, with the main character wandering around rambling levels obliterating a vicious mélange of grotesque enemies. The real 'beauty' of the game is the intelligent backgrounds, where alien corpses litter the ground for the entirety of the mission.

Konami's line-up of loadables are all due in the New Year.



Separated at birth

Fo Fai from *Battle Arena Toshinden* and, somewhat predictably, the martial arts teacher in *The Karate Kid*, Mr Miyagi played by Pat Morita (also Arnold from *Happy Days*). Altogether now, 'Wax on, wax off, wax on...'



Sound Of Silence

Sony's marketing is going full guns at targeting age groups that may never have owned, let alone played, a computer games machine before. The company seems set on making the PlayStation the trendiest gadget of the moment by installing the 32-bit wonder in some of the wildest places – and is making a damn fine show of it.

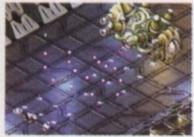
So, if you ever happen to visit the famed Ministry Of Sound club in London, expect to get blown away not just by the music but by some of the craziest PlayStation titles available. Housed in their very own games arena within the club, punters will be able to experience the madness of *Wipeout* or *Ridge Racer* first hand – if your legs are getting a little bit tired your fingers can do all the work with this novel approach to 'chilling out'.

This style of media crossover is becoming more and more apparent. SCE's *Wipeout* boasts a cool soundtrack of Leftfield and Chemical Brothers tunes and there are already plans to make use of Sony's vast music arm further.

Moreover, PlayStations have already been successfully installed at London's Leisure Lounge club as well as making a big splash at the recent T In The Park concerts.

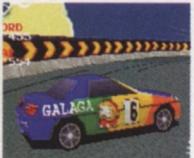
Blimey, it's an invasion...

'Does Britannia rule the new wave?' PSM checks on the progress of some 44 titles being coded by the most talented UK developers. Page 36.



Fresh Viewpoint

Now Neo-Geo shoot 'em up *Viewpoint* has been picked up by Electronic Arts for conversion to PlayStation. This smart Zaxxon-style shooter boasts a host of slick, pre-rendered sprites and looks fabulous. Done.



Great moments in Videogaming

Number 1: Performing the perfect powerslide in *Ridge Racer*.

For most people, controlling the cars in *Ridge Racer* is a matter of holding down the X button with the base of the thumb, and rocking forward onto □ to brake around corners.

However, true racing aficionados will have perfected the powerslide, whereby you hurtle into the corner and ease off the juice. Then, at the precise moment, you re-apply the power – throw the back end out and screech around the bend, maintaining speed and engine revs, ready to zoom off up the straight.

It takes time to perfect, but when you get it right... when you finally perform that perfect powerslide, leaving the opposition for dust, that is a great videogaming moment!

Crystal Dynamics conversions

Now that PlayStation has arrived, Palo Alto-based codeshop Crystal Dynamics are busy converting their back catalogue of 3DO games and adding a couple of dedicated PlayStation titles to their already bulging portfolio.

One of the first companies to clamber aboard the 32-bit bandwagon, Crystal Dynamics was instrumental in supporting (some would say salvaging) the launch of 3DO, with the pack-in racing game *Crash 'n Burn* and the impressive, if ungainly, *Total Eclipse*.

Founded by Strauss Zelnick (ex-head of 20th Century Fox, no less), the

Californian code house has an impressive array of conversions and original PlayStation titles for UK release between November and March '96. The full line-up of ex-3DO games consists of SF extravaganzas *Total Eclipse* (reviewed this issue), *Off-World Interceptor* and *Solar Eclipse*, plus the pretty-but-moribund platformer *Gex*. Original titles for PlayStation include *3D Baseball '95*, *Blazing Dragons* and *Legacy Of Kain*.

With the benefit of hindsight, Crystal has tweaked some of its conversions, adding extra levels and, we hope, improving the gameplay mechanics. Unless they've completely lost the plot, both *Eclipse* games should be well worth

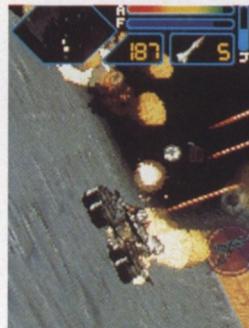
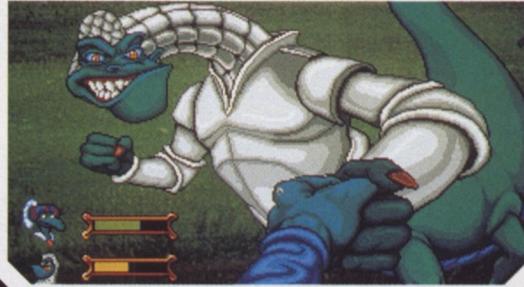
closer inspection (especially *Solar*, as it 'stars' Claudia Christian from out of *Babylon 5*).

Of the new titles, *Blazing Dragons* sounds the most interesting. With a storyline by ex-*Monty Python* member, Terry Jones, this 'animated interactive cartoon' (oh dear) pits man against dragons in an Arthurian world of legend, where humans are the evildoers and flying serpents the noble warriors. With 3,000 frames of animation and a humourous voice-over it has potential.

Finally, *Legacy Of Kain* promises full arcade-style combat in a world inhabited by vampires feeding on the blood of their victims. Nice.



Total Eclipse (top left), **Off-World Interceptor** (bottom left) and **Solar Eclipse** (bottom right) all make the uphill transition from 3DO to Sony PlayStation. **Blazing Dragons** (middle) has the advantage of a script by ex-Python Terry Jones, while **Legacy Of Kain** (top right) has the advantage of being on the PlayStation.



Namco dig up gold

The PlayStation's staunchest supporter has several more titles in its cast-iron release bucket. *Museum Piece Vol. 1* – which will almost definitely be renamed for the UK market – is an astounding menagerie of Namco's greatest coin-ops. The full collection of seven games from 1980-82 contains shoot 'em up *Bosconian*, arcade puzzler *Toypop*, top-down racers *Rally X*

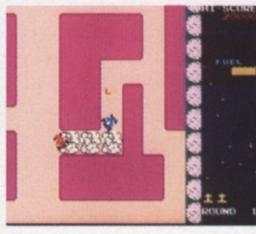
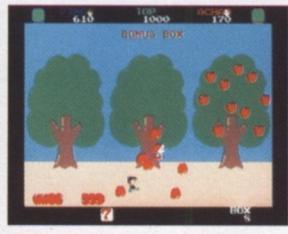
and *New Rally X* plus the classics-which-need-no description *Galaga*, *Pac-Man* and *Pole Position*.

And for those new to the gaming fraternity, don't let the (extremely) basic graphics put you off. In sheer gameplay terms, these titles are among the best ever written – and include a few personal favourites of Shigeru Miyamoto, inventor of the *Super Mario* games.

Museum Piece Vol. 1 is due for a

November release in Japan, and will be winging its way to these shores early next year. We sincerely hope.

As well as these raves from the grave, Namco also have a brace of sports titles on the sidelines, with soccer sim *Prime Goal X* and an as-yet unnamed baseball title. Both titles are Orient-bound with releases in September and November, respectively, although there's no UK release date. Yet.



(From left) Namco's classic collection contains, amongst others, *Pac-Man*, *Toypop* and *Rally-X*. The CD is introduced by some spiffy rendered scenes starring Mr and Ms *Pac-Man*!

Core Design's PlayStation fascination continues apace with two new titles: *Swagman* [left] and the really rather lovely looking *Tomb Raiders*.



THE COMPLETELY UNOFFICIAL RUMOURS COLUMN

PSM's industry mole dredges up dirt from the darkened underground of the videogame world. BEWARE! Rumour, gossip and pure, unsubstantiated fabrication zone - read (and believe) at your own peril...

- Konami are thinking about bringing two unspecified Japanese titles to the UK market. Without licensing these games, they would forever stay in the far east with funny text.

- Apparently, and to Sega's intense chagrin, PlayStation CDs can hold 100 Mb more data than Saturn CDs.

- Virgin's *3Decathlon* - a *Track And Field*-style joypad wagger with polygons - has been put back to '96 on account of it not being up to scratch. And Virgin's *Converse Hardcore Hoops* has, by all accounts, been canned completely.

- *Ridge Racer 2* with new courses, a rear-view mirror and, blissfully, a two-player link-up is due for Spring '96.

- A graphically-enhanced *Jumping Flash 2* is already in production. Expect the same glorious gameplay but with bigger, better levels - and, thankfully, more of 'em.

- High-end coders Software Creations are working on a top-secret PlayStation game. It's been in production for over a year and still has a year to go. Apparently it's a sort of 3D role-playing adventure-type game. So that'll be PlayStation *Equinox* then...

- Ocean have two stunning games on the books, being coded by Neon in Germany. An untitled helicopter game and something called *Tunnel B-1* (working title) showed off what happens when you give imaginative European coders a PlayStation development kit. PSM awaits the completed games with bated breath.

- Between launch and Christmas Acclaim have no fewer than ten PlayStation releases including a conversion of the popular *X-Men* coin-op, *Children Of The Atom*.

Core blimey!

Making use of the PlayStation's amazing graphics capabilities, Derby-based Core Design is currently working on a stunning 3D action adventure which is, allegedly, unique in its approach.

Tomb Raiders opts for a third-person perspective, so you can view the action from a number of different atmospheric camera angles, thanks to the incorporation of an 'intelligent camera system'. The views switch according to your polygon character's position within the level. Doesn't sound that revolutionary at this stage - this is a feature which PC gamers have been enjoying for some time. We shall wait and see.

The adventure sees the player exploring a vast texture-mapped game world on a daring mission to uncover a series of ancient mysteries. The gameplay adopts both action and strategy, so there's plenty to think about as well as kill. Animated cut-scenes pad out the on-going plot and speech gives the whole affair some life. What's more, it has a female lead stealing the limelight. And about time too, we murmur quietly.

Taking influence from the masterful mind of Tim Burton (*Batman*, *Beetlejuice*, *Nightmare Before Christmas*) *Swagman* from Core Design is a journey into your worst nightmares. This is about as weird as adventures come, and probably more stylised than you've seen before.

Using an overhead view, *Swagman* has a slightly skewed perspective giving the graphics a somewhat drunken, wonky aspect. But with both backgrounds and in-game characters having been created on Silicon Graphics workstations this is looking very impressive indeed. There's plenty of colour, detail, inventive enemies, and plenty of computer-drawn cut scenes and animated sequences for you to relish. As for gameplay, you can expect loads of action with numerous puzzles and brain-teasing obstacles.

Both *Swagman* and *Tomb Raiders* are being readied for a summer '96 release. But tune in next month where, weather permitting, more news awaits.



Discworld Strategy Guide

Even though the game has only just hit the streets, Prima Publishing has already released a strategy guide book for SIE's compelling point and click adventure based on Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series of novels.

Priced at a reasonably affordable £17.99 the book (ISBN: 0-5521-4439-8) takes you by the hand and shepherds you gently through one of the most complex adventures known to man. Easy to follow, the book is divided up into four chapters covering each of the game's four Acts in exhaustive depth. The content never leaves you guessing, outlining solutions to all the puzzles

concisely, with accompanying black and white screen shots to reiterate the point.

Strategy guides seem to be a bit of a cop-out making it far too easy to finish a game, extinguishing the frustration factor and the enjoyment element with it. However, with a game as complicated as *Discworld* you'll welcome any assistance you can lay your sweaty mitts on, and this does the job admirably.

For more info on strategy guides and hint books contact: Computer Manuals at 50 James Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 2BA.

Can't get past the guards? Trouble with spells? Can't load the game? Try the *Discworld Strategy Guide*.



QuizStation

Okay, as a bit of light relief we've got a T-shirt or a game or some other PlayStation-related stuff to give away. Simply peruse the following teasers and send your answers to: QuizStation, *The Official PlayStation Magazine*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

1) Name two of the three famous actors in *Street Fighter II: The Movie*.

2) 'Are you the mickey?' Fill in the missing word - the name of a thumping game featured in this issue.

3) The Surfaris 1963 smash hit instrumental shares the name of a game in this issue. Which game?

4) Which famous fantasy author wrote the *Discworld* series of books, also the subject of a game reviewed in this issue?

5) What does PAL stand for, chum?

6) And now for the decider...

Tell us a joke involving the word 'polygon' at some point. 'This parrot is dead... etc.'

Entries here by November 20. Winner's name to be written here next month. Stuff in post thereafter. Good luck!

Ballblazer rides again

Market leaders LucasArts are dipping a tentative toe in the 32-bit console market with a revamped version of the ancient eight-bit blaster, *Ballblazer*.

Ballblazer first made its mark on the Atari 800 and Commodore 64 home computers back in the early eighties, where it's super-fast two-player action endeared it to the reviewers of the time.

Ballblazer X (the name may yet change) features split-screen two-person play, and comes with a variety of competition styles. The early version seen by *PSM* looked to be a reasonable facsimile of the original, but with souped-up graphics; LucasArts are adamant the finished version will be vastly superior with rendered rotofoils and detailed stadium graphics.

Flat TVs for '97

Not content with creating the best games machine of all time, Sony have also cracked the problem of flat-screen TVs.

The new LCD technology, dubbed 'Plasmatrix', involves using hundreds of tiny tubes filled with plasma – a low-pressure gas ionised by several hundred volts – to activate the individual LCD crystals.

The new screens have a lifespan of around ten years and can be produced in sizes up to a wall-encompassing 50 inches! The first Plasmatrix TVs will be paltry 7cm in width and should start shipping in the spring of 1997 (at which point we'll be hassling Sony for our own 50" screen for 'review purposes', of course).



Capcom comeback

After its 16-bit obsession with all things *Street Fighter II*, Capcom are using the PlayStation as a platform to bigger and better things. Having said that, one of its first titles is the beat 'em up (DOH!) *Darkstalkers* – a classy conversion of the *Vampire: The Night Warriors* coin-op.

Forgoing the shaded, pseudo-realistic graphics of *SFII*, *Darkstalkers* is pure cartoon fantasy, with bold comic-style characters set against suitably horrific backdrops. Its beautifully drawn and animated fighters range from vampires to werewolves to zombies, and

include the usual selection of hunky, fat and thin blokes with a token gesture to the female denomination. Play mechanics are straight out of *SFII* with a predictable array of combos, fireballs and the *SF* trademark Super Attack Power Bar. *Darkstalkers* is pretty much complete but for final tweaking and bug-elimination, so it's a close run thing between preview and full review.

Capcom's other biggie is *Biohazard* – a texture-mapped 3D polygonfest of *Alone In The Dark* proportions. Details are scant, but if looks could kill, this would be a sniper in Wembley with a Vulcan Cannon.



(Top) *Biohazard* boasts all manner of creepies and, indeed, crawlies.
(Bottom) Cartoon artwork marks Capcom's *Darkstalkers* beat 'em up.

Read this

The PSM rating system explained...

Whatever pre-conceived ideas you may have of games rating systems – whether you've read dozens of mags or this is your first – forget them.

PSM's ratings are different. They may resemble other scoring systems but we have one major difference: ours is better. What we aim to do is to bring you honest reviews of games, but in a way so that you can make up your own mind about the quality and personal appeal of the software.

Rule 1: read the bloody text. We labour long and hard over our words, so you can get a good idea of what we think. The overall rating is a guideline to the quality of the game compared to other titles available – but it's not an absolute figure, etched in granite: planet's won't spin off their axes just because a game gets an eight instead of a nine. So it's worth actually reading what we have to say about the game.

Our reviews are rated out of ten – with five as an average score for an average game. But let's get it straight from the start: most of the games rated at five or over are Still Worth Buying. A game scoring five is probably flawed in some way – like it's maybe too easy, or the gameplay is somehow badly structured. But it's not a dismal failure and will still provide some entertainment for your money – just not as much as a six or seven.

Only when games start sliding into the fours, threes and (heaven forfend) the twos, that you should really cross the road to avoid them.

Games which we consider extra-special in some way are also awarded our Star Player logo: generally these go to eights, nines and, if the constellations are in alignment, tens. This is a clear indication that, in our esteemed opinion, these games deserve to go on your 'Must Buy' list. It's also possible that a seven might get one if it's a great game with some lastability problems, for instance.

PSM Ratings

10 Rare. A stunning game of unswerving quality, playability and longevity. A thoroughbred once-in-a-blue-moon classic.

9 Fantastic. Clearly a very special piece of software, which should be purchased ASAP.

8 Top notch. A bloody fine game and no small error.

7 A good title marred by a few minor irritations, but nothing too serious.

6 Flawed but still demanding of your attention. A good idea gone awry, possibly.

5 A straight average. By no means a bad game, but residing in the 'could do better' category.

4 Below average. Probably has some serious problems of gameplay and lifespan.

3 Grim. Possibly some fun to be had – but not much.

2 Very crap indeed. A badly flawed, poorly structured and generally duff title.

1 Utterly devoid of merit: avoid as you would a rabid dog. With the runs.



Recommends

Ridge Racer

Truly *Ridge Racer*, despite being trackularly challenged, is the finest racing game on the manor and even though it's for the solo driver, racing time trials against pals is enormous fun. And best of all, it really does get better the more you practice because there are subtleties to the game that don't immediately manifest themselves. You Must Have *Ridge Racer*.

Wipeout

This is one of the most visually astounding games in the history of all things. Select your craft, bob up and down on a cushion of air and await the green light. Vamoosh! And away you go, hurtling along undulating courses, collecting power-ups, surging toward a top-three placing. And backed by sounds from top plinky-plonky bands like Leftfield, which you either love or loathe. No matter, for *Wipeout* is NEXT GENERATION, and a blast to boot.

Jumping Flash

Robot rabbit Robbit, evil property-developer Baron Aloha, outer space. It can only mean one thing. A garbled plot for a platform game. But a superb, 3D one at that, which affords the gamer the opportunity to embark on death-defying leaps from pillar to post, gathering the carrot-shaped power-ups, avoiding the substance-spewing creatures that cross your path. *Jumping Flash* is mechanically superb, the feeling of vertigo never far. Splendid.

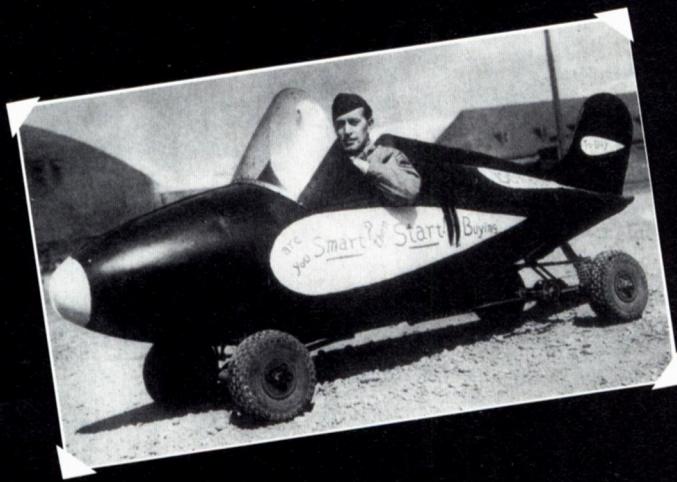
NBA Jam: TE

So the players heads are ridiculously large and they can jump about 20 yards in the air and the ball sometimes catches fire. Who cares? *NBA Jam* is two-on-two basketball, a game you see the guys in American TV shows playing. Like *Baywatch*. It's fast, end-to-end, high-scoring fare and you can boost your performance with power-ups. A rim-ramming, ball-bouncing basketfest.



NOVASTORM

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Games World Magazine

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Power-tripping in the UK

PlayStation has been designed the
most significant advance in gaming hardware

since the Super Nintendo. And to bolster its launch, **Sony Computer Entertainment** is about to unleash a formidable product line-up...

Total NBA '96



[1] The NBA licence means that all the players, teams and stats are correct as of the '96 season. **[2]** The 3D polygon court can be rotated a full 360°.



Wow. The only word that sprang to mind when *PSM* visited Sony Computer Entertainment for an exclusive look at its stunning new basketball game, *Total NBA '96*. It's the first SCE title to be developed in-house here in the UK – and what a lunge from the starting blocks it is.

All a bit hush-hush, the game is an important product for Sony in as much as it will be vying against the might of Electronic Arts' sports experience and its licensed NBA game, slated for a release alongside Sony's title. But having acquired the NBA licence, Sony too has full freedom to explore all features of the National Basketball Association.

'Basically this means we can use all the NBA players' faces, names, attributes, team logos, team shirts – everything.'

And it's all correct as of the forthcoming season', chirps **Jules Burt**, senior software engineer and team leader. 'There's going to be a lot of competition,' he muses, 'but we're confident that we've generated a better game environment.'

A game environment which is fuelled by a gob-smacking graphical focus, the most notable visual facet being the graceful 3D motion and perspective that creates a truly interactive feel. 'We really feel that we are pushing the PlayStation to its limits', boasts Jules. 'This game will probably have the highest use of PlayStation hardware that any sports title will have. In some ways it betters the like of *Tohshinden* and *Tekken*.'

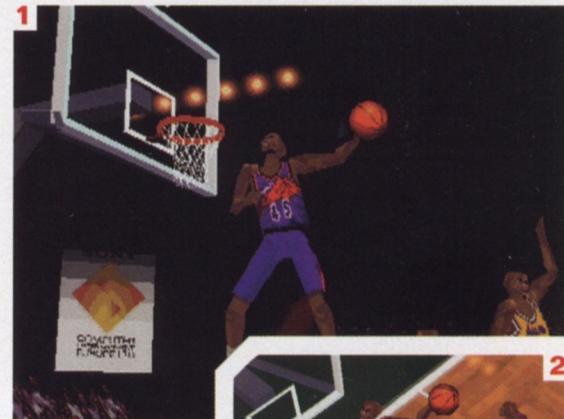
Putting the world in motion

So in what respect is this pushing the boundaries? Jules again: 'In as much as how many polygons it can draw, the number of colours it has, and the technique we use for the players. Look at a game like *Tekken*, where you've got what we call two hierarchical (ie jointed) players, and compare it with *Total NBA* which has ten'.

This means that the number of polygons being shifted per second is quite staggering. Jules continues, 'It's about 500 per player, then... [grabbing a calculator and muttering to himself, "2000 for the court, 500 for the players"]... I'd say it's about 210,000 polygons per second'.

Suffice it to say, graphically *Total NBA '96* is mightily impressive, but technicalities aside, one of the major achievements is the inclusion of motion capture. 'The majority of other companies are using motion capture

■ PUBLISHER: **SCE** ■ DEVELOPER: **In-house**
■ RELEASE DATE: **November** ■ ORIGIN: **UK**



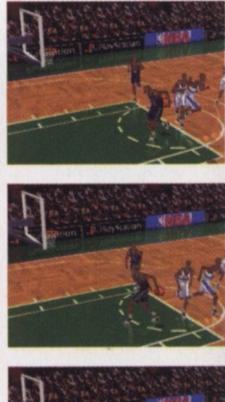
generate sprites. The difficulty with that is that you then can't move the camera around, as they're flat 2D objects', explains Jules. At this point he demonstrates the extent of the game's visual flexibility by rotating the court a full 360° around a pivotal player, then swiftly pans in for a closer look at the spots (if he had any) on his Gouraud-shaded face.

The further benefit of using motion capture technology is the graceful movement of the players who twist and turn with frightening realism. 'For each animation there's 30 frames per second. On the sprite-based animation there's usually about 6-8 frames per second – hence the jerky motion', explains Jules. 'But here, for every single frame you see on the screen, we've got a frame of



[1] All the character movements are based on motion capture animations, resulting in outstanding realism and fluidity. **[2]** One of the many replay camera angles, here showing the 'live' reflections. Oh, and all the players will have their correct hairstyles in the finished game!





1 Charging back down the court for a quick basket, accompanied by rapturous cheering, a squeaking of trainers, and the pounding thump of the ball on the springy court. Honest. **2** Getting ready to throw in – not the towel, but the Gouraud-shaded ball which boasts 784 individual animations of its own. **3** Another famous basketball player, no doubt, performing a commendably forceful dunk shot, to the despair of the opposition.



animation, of motion. That's why it's so smooth. We made about 90 individual motion captures, and in some instances we flipped them, to get left and right-handed players.'

Then there's added graphical niceties in the way the PlayStation generates 'live' reflections, as Jules discloses. 'The player isn't a sprite, it's a 3D skeleton. Starting, er... there [pointing at a player's groin] at what we call 'the root', you've got a joint that goes to the two shoulders and joints going to the various limbs. The computer works out, in 3D, where the leg is, and creates an upside-down model. It literally reflects it and draws it in semi-transparency to give you a reflective effect.'

Furthermore, the team has managed to manipulate the numbers on the players' shirts so that they scale and move with the players authentically, no matter from which perspective you're viewing the game.

But it's not just the on-court action that's had all the attention. A number of cinematic sequences, generated on Silicon Graphics workstations, are beautifully constructed and executed to exude that 'watching sports TV' feel. The

presentation is outstanding, with SGI animations evident from the outset: intro to menu screens – something is always going on. 'We don't like black screens, so there aren't any', says Jules.

But while the visual side of things is instantly astonishing, the hands-on aspect is by far the most important. And in this respect, you won't be disappointed either.

Getting a piece of the action

With a choice of three in-game views, including first-person perspective, you can play the game from top to bottom or from left to right. And, amazingly, a maximum of eight players can compete simultaneously using two multi-taps. A full range of one-on-one, tournament, and challenge options are also available for the solitary player.

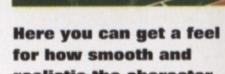
The control system is simple, comprising simply of tackle, pass, block, shoot, and dunk shot moves. And the pace at which all moves are executed, and consequently reacted upon by the computer-controlled players, is graceful and impressive. It's a peculiarity which Jules attributes to the level of Artificial Intelligence. 'We've tried to make it as realistic as possible. The AI always considers the

number of players you've got on the court at any one time – it's aware of real strategies used by the various NBA teams and acts accordingly. So we feel it's quite complex. The guy who's been writing the AI has been doing it for eight months to get it right – he's pretty sick of it too!'

As for the audio, this has yet to be included but the programmers are promising a wealth of digitised sound-effects – including crowd chants, backboard slams, the pounding sound of the ball on the court, even squeaks from the players' trainers – to further enhance the atmosphere of the game. But is there anything which isn't going to see the light of day this time round, thanks to hardware limitations?

'We'd like to have run the game at 60 frames per second but it's not possible – there's just too much going on. We think we've pretty much pushed the boundaries as it is', says Jules. 'We feel like we've a dual role: we're Sony's elite development team on site, and not only are we looking to make a product that makes money, we want to inspire other developers as well – so they'll say, "Hey, this is really possible!"'

So it would seem that the mighty sports division of companies such as Electronic Arts are going to have some serious competition on their hands, if this is the kind of product that Sony intends to push. And although this may be its first sports title to be developed in the UK, it certainly won't be the last, with some other interesting things under way. What are they? Now that would be telling...



Here you can get a feel for how smooth and realistic the character animation is, as we show frame by frame a superbly placed dunk shot by, er... well, some basketball player.

"We really feel that we are

pushing the PlayStation to its limits.

This game will probably have the

highest use of PlayStation hardware that any

sports title will have.'



Mortal Kombat 3

■ PUBLISHER: SCE ■ DEVELOPER: Williams
■ RELEASE DATE: November ■ ORIGIN: US



1 Let's hope that these fighters have got good dental insurance. 2 Many familiar moves, such as fireballs and the like, are incorporated into MK 3 but there are also some new 'Animalities' to try.

Seen here in its third incarnation, *Mortal Kombat* is one of the most successful 2D beat 'em up themes ever and a legend in its own lifetime. It's certainly one of the big coups for Sony Computer Entertainment which, after a heated boardroom-table battle, snatched the Williams licence from the sweaty and rather presumptuous grasp of fellow software mogul Atari.

But so convinced was Atari that it had acquired the multi-million-dollar deal, that press releases were prematurely posted – pre-empting the final signing of the contract. Oh dear. 'I couldn't stop laughing', recalls **Perry Rodgers**, the talent behind the PlayStation conversion, with a smile. 'Everyone asked me what I was laughing about and when I told them, they laughed. We all had a very good laugh – in fact we laughed all the way to the bank.'

Arcade-perfect, *MK 3* is stunning to watch. Fans of the original *MK* games will be astounded by the clarity of the graphics, the fluidity of the motion, and the swiftness of gameplay – it's a giant step up from the SNES or Mega Drive adaptations. Furthermore, if you're an avid player of the arcade version, you'll be tickled pink to see that everything found in that version has materialised in the PlayStation conversion. Nothing has been left out. But there's more...

'We've managed to add stuff, in our version, that wasn't in the coin-op', enthuses **Mike Abbott**, Vice President of Software and Music at Williams. 'All the sound has been re-mixed for the PlayStation's stereo. Then we've thrown in some extra Kombat Kodes



for good measure – we even have our own tombstones!'

And what of the characters? **Ed Boon**, co-designer of the *Mortal Kombat* concept: 'Sonya and Kano are back with a vengeance. Smoke and Jade too. We're going to use them again, but this time as controllable, hidden characters.'

Familiar favourites, but the path is clear for a wealth of new and more delectable characters. Ed continues: 'We're going to have more characters than ever in *Mortal Kombat 3*. We've been working on a female Goro-style character – she's way cool. We've also got some robot Ninjas. They're a little similar to the old Sub Zero and Scorpion characters.'

Strength of character

PSM pauses for breath but Ed steams on: 'We've also got the Bride of Shao Kahn who has the useful power of being able to fly on screen. Another newbie is a SWAT guy who uses his baton in combos. Kano has got his knives, still, but he can do a lot more with them – he can swing them about instead of just throwing them.'

There are just so many features to take into account, it's difficult to know



where to start. There's an abundance of 'hidden' extras, as well as the highly popular Fatalities, Babalities, and Friendships – plus a wide range of new moves, including Animalities.'

'The way it works is that you win your fight, pull off a combination of directions and buttons (like a normal fatality) and turn into an animal. You then get to maul your opponent. Way cool.' Ed's enthusiasm is without measure, but the guys doing the PlayStation conversion somehow have encapsulated this vibrance into their own work. In short, *Mortal Kombat 3* is truly alive.

And we wonder if things can get better. Even though it appears that everything imaginable has been squeezed into this superb conversion, it would seem that *MK 4* is already on the drawing boards at Williams.



1 Special moves are still tricky to perform, and now you've got combos to master too! 2 MK 3 sees us in vampire heaven. 3 Kicks and punches are the order of the day; high ones, low ones, power blows, and weak blows. So much to do in so little time.

Warhawk

■ PUBLISHER: SCE ■ DEVELOPER: Singletrac
■ RELEASE DATE: November ■ ORIGIN: US



1 Enemy at 12 o'clock – but not for much longer, as missiles hurtle off for the kill. 2 View of the explosive action from one of the external views. 3 Missiles scream in from all directions as you try to topple an enemy camp.

Although *Warhawk* has been dubbed as a 'stunning 3D flight simulation', don't categorize this as something at which only the anorak gamers will drool.

Designed with a distinct arcade feel, *Warhawk* is mad and frantic to the last; with cataclysmic explosions, pounding sound-effects, and an arsenal of weapons so staggering it makes Saddam Hussein's army look like a gaggle of brawly-equipped OAPs on a day trip to Brighton.

Strapped into some extremely advanced combat hardware, the world is at your fingertips. All it takes is a quick blast on the throttle and you're swooping across the sprawling terrain, skimming over enemy gun emplacements, weaving through caverns, cornering around

towering texture-mapped buildings, and dog-fighting with hostiles.

Or perhaps you can just admire the scenery from one of the many viewpoints, ranging from cockpit to chase. If you've got time, that is: the action is fast and furious, with the enemy barrage continuous and unforgiving.

Could well be a winner...

Rendered sequences find their way into the game's plot-setting intro sequence.



ESPN Extreme Sports

Keep low to generate more road grip, as you cruise through a gate [1]. Oil barrels are too high to jump, so you must look for a break in the wall [2].

Could this be the weak link in Sony's chain? *ESPN Extreme Sports* is obviously aimed at the hip 'n' trendy surfer/skater-type youngster. It's a cross between *Road Rash* and a rather dodgy tarmac toaster called *Skitchin'* (Electronic Arts' vain attempt at *Road Rash* on roller-skates), released last

year for the Sega Mega Drive.

Competing in a number of road races against a computer player, or a human opponent utilising a simultaneous split-screen mode, you view the action from behind an athletic skater 'dude' under your control. Moving responsively left and right, as well as jumping nimbly to avoid looming obstacles, your alter ego is a master of the skateboard, mountain bike, street-luge, and roller-skates.

The idea is to accelerate down the game's six courses, while attempting to avoid such hindrances as hay bales, scaffolding, oil drums, and chickens (don't ask) in the fastest time. But if this adrenaline-pumping action isn't enough, punching and kicking your opponents is also allowed. Wicked?

■ PUBLISHER: SCE ■ DEVELOPER: In-house
■ RELEASE DATE: November ■ ORIGIN: US



Failing to jump over barriers will only damage your pride and your chances of winning [1]. Use obstacles to your advantage - push your opponents into them [2].

Philosoma



[1] 3D action as you blast oncoming enemy craft. [2] Standard shoot 'em up action in the 2D sections.

No console, regardless of how advanced it may be, can escape the regurgitation of the timeless scrolling shoot 'em up - and that includes the PlayStation.

One of the most appealing aspects of SCE's sci-fi offering, though, is the graphical variety that's on offer. This isn't just another of those tedious 2D vertical or horizontal scrolling endeavours - although these viewpoints are incorporated into the game's overall structure.

Utilising the PlayStation's incredible graphics capabilities are 3D sections in which you manoeuvre through weaving canyons, guns ablaze, while looking up the rear end of responsive space craft. Furthermore, just to

confuse, during the later stages of the game (of which there are four main phases, each comprising sub-levels) you find yourself zooming back and forth over an isometric playing area, annihilating the enemy riff-raff on a number of different planes - all adding to *Philosoma*'s diversity.

[1] Explosions and huge weapons aplenty. [2] Watch your back! Another of the changing perspectives, as you race away from the enemy force.



Twisted Metal

Take care that your car doesn't take too many knocks, else it'll give up the ghost before time.



Early on in its development *Twisted Metal* is shaping up to be quite an unusual title. A 3D combat-driving game, you are graced with a choice of 12 vehicles, ranging from a beefy juggernaut to a rather pathetic (and pink) ice-cream van. The idea? Blow the crap out of your adversaries in five interactive environments, picking up the bonuses as you go and having a frantic and damn fine time in the process.

Graphically this game looks impressive, with fluid 3D motion, intricate detailing on the vehicles themselves, and neat little touches - such as the whopping explosions and the steady increase of batterings and

bruises which cover your automobile, the more you bash into things.

Although it wasn't up and running at the time of viewing, *PSM* has been assured that there will also be a serial link available, allowing players using two PlayStations to compete against each other head to head.

[1] Steaming into action in style, driving a lush pink Caddy. [2] Not overly agile, but great for ramming, try the Terminator 2-style juggernaut.

■ PUBLISHER: SCE ■ DEVELOPER: Singletrac
■ RELEASE DATE: November ■ ORIGIN: US



PrePlay EA Sports line-up



Electronic Arts has practically **cornered the market** in detailed **sports simulations**, and PlayStation is next on its hit list. **PSM** blows the whistle on EA's latest endeavours



When Electronic Arts decided to launch its own sports label back in 1991, little did it realise what a monster it would create. Four years and 20 million sales later, EA Sports is recognised as the leading purveyor of fine sporting simulations. And all this with just a handful of titles – most notably the wildly successful *John Madden Football*, *FIFA International Soccer* and *PGA Tour Golf* series. These three – along with a National Hockey League-endorsed ice hockey sim and a new basketball game

– form the spearhead of EA's PlayStation assault. The brightest star in EA's sporting firmament now must be *FIFA Soccer '96*, usurping the acclaimed but lamentably American *John Madden Football*. *FIFA Soccer*, in all its guises, is the brain-child of EA's Canadian arm. Previously known as Distinctive Software, Vancouver-based EA Canada was responsible for the *FIFA* concept and the bulk of the numerous versions – including the new PlayStation title.

Residing smugly on the top rung of the *FIFA* evolutionary ladder, the PlayStation version (full title, *FIFA Soccer '96*) brings with it the full wealth of experience gained in coding *FIFA* for other machines, and the gameplay – *FIFA's* Achilles' heel – has been vastly improved. The player intelligence is now much enhanced, so it's less of a kick 'n' rush game. Visually, *FIFA* has never looked

better. EA Canada has enhanced its 'Virtual Stadium' technology, which they pioneered for 3DO, adding a roving game camera and the godlike ability to view the proceedings from any angle. Even stupid ones. Special routines detect when the player's view of the game is about to be obscured and automatically flip to a new viewpoint; the result being more like watching a cleverly edited movie than a TV broadcast.

Inhabiting the Virtual Stadium are virtual players which have been modelled in 3D using Silicon Graphics (SGI) workstations. The improved



[Top left] Wireframe to render – the evolution of a virtual player. **[1, 2]** *FIFA's* Motion Designed soccer stars move fluidly and realistically at any distance – even close up **[inset]**.



[1] We join the Denmark v Sweden game as Dahlén makes a break... **[2]** For the dressing room and cookies at half time.



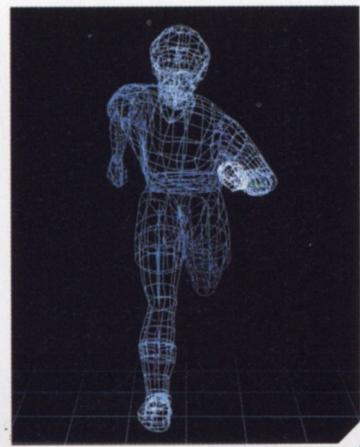
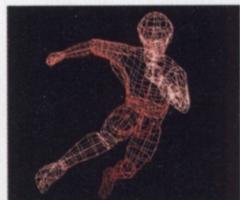
Sport for square eyes: the televisual treats of *FIFA '96*



As with all of its sports games, EA endeavours to replicate the full Saturday afternoon TV football experience, with tumbling logos, zooming camera shots and fly-bys of the stadium. The in-game options screens are all similarly glossy and hi-res.

■ PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts	■ DEVELOPER:	In-house	■ START DATE:	Various
■ RELEASE DATE:	Nov to Feb '96	■ ORIGIN:	US/Canada	■ COMPLETE:	80-95%
■ PRICE:	£40-£45	■ STYLE:	Sports simulations	■ PLAYERS:	Two to four

To generate *FIFA*'s virtual players, EA Canada employed its own Motion Design technology to capture the fluid motion of real football players. 3D player models were generated on Silicon Graphics computers to which the life-like motion information was added. Every frame of each sequence was rendered up in full colour and turned into sprites for use in the game proper.



character animation is the product of EA Canada's hybrid motion capture system, coined Motion Design, which emulates realistic player movement. It isn't a true motion capture system – the sort of technology used in beat 'em ups like *Tekken* – but uses skeletal animation software running on an SGI system. Real players were filmed, digitized and then animated by hand for more fluid movement.

Enough of the pre-pro stuff, now for some statistical information – statisimination, if you will. The PlayStation version proudly boasts 12 international leagues, including England, France, Italy... in fact all the major leagues. Plus Scotland. The UK league of the original *FIFA* is also included, for some real home-grown footie, and genuine player names are in evidence throughout – over 3,000 in total. Highlights of PlayStation *FIFA* include a running commentary from none other than John Motson. In all *FIFA* '96 contains quite literally 14,000 different bits of Motson speech.

There's also a new practice mode



1 All the intricacies of football have been reproduced, including the tackle-protection ritual during free kicks. 2 Attention to realism is of the utmost – even down to this Sunday league-style pitch.



1

in which you can perfect your corners, free kicks, penalties and dives in the box before taking on and thrashing your unsuspecting chums. All the options screens have a random selection of eight soundtracks with different themes. Lurking within the eight available is a Latin American beat, a techno track and EA's favourite, a ragga toon.

Professional flourish

EA's 'good walk ruined' simulator is *PGA Tour* '96, a golf sim that's been doing the multi-format rounds for yonks. The new PlayStation version promises three brand new courses, all of which are on the US tour bus schedule: Avenel, Spyglass Hill and another one which we forgot, and have never heard of anyway. What's the matter with St Andrews, we say.

There are several enhancements



1 It has to be said that the swing-o-meter of *PGA Tour* *Golf* isn't the most inconspicuous of golfing aids. 2 This simple putt on the first hole is doomed to failure thanks to a ring of manure around the flag.

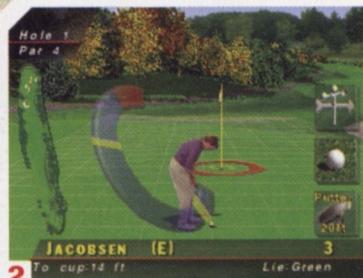


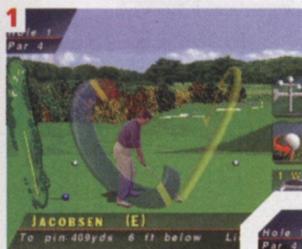
2

1 EA Canada's Virtual Stadium technology looks terrific – this epic shot pretty much says it all. 2 There are dozens of options screens in *FIFA* '96 – this one allows you to choose any of 12 international leagues.

over previous incarnations of *PGA Tour*, the main one being the addition of real golf pros portrayed in a frighteningly realistic manner. Fourteen pros – including the likes of Tom Kite, Davis Love III, Fuzzy Zoeller and Craig Stadler – have all been filmed against bluescreen for inclusion in video clips and as club-swingers in the game itself. The interface has also had an overhaul so that's it much more user-friendly, and the physics of the gameplay have been amended. The ball now reacts far more realistically to changes in the slope and type of terrain.

The power of the PlayStation also means that the speed and clarity of the graphics are now on a par (yikes) with the impressive gameplay. The texture-mapped polygon course means that you can view the scene from any vantage point, merely by





1 On-screen arrows tell you how your shot will turn out. 2 PlayStation's superior graphics provide a gorgeous backdrop for *PGA Tour's* gameplay. You can almost hear giggling and rustling in the shrubbery.

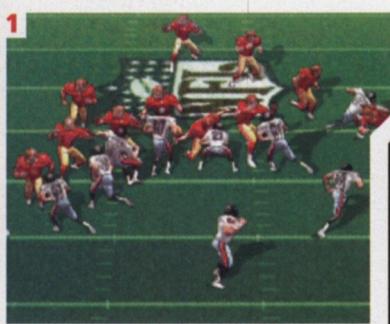


→ hovering around, insect-like. There's also a new picture-in-picture mode, whereby you're treated to a reverse angle or overhead ball-cam view of your shot, while the main screen shows the ball flying effortlessly into the rough/a bunker/out of bounds, and so on. Okay, it adds nothing to the gameplay, but it's a neat touch.

The first of EA's titles to really

Work on the player intelligence has also resulted in clever goalies and better defence... sadly

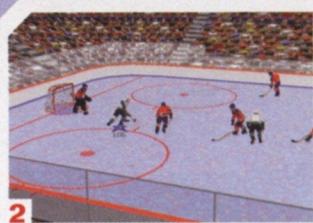
cause a stir was *John Madden Football* on the Mega Drive, way back in 1990. Since then it's appeared on all manner of consoles and computers, each version leapfrogging the last in terms of technical prowess and graphical flair. So it should come as no surprise to find that PlayStation *Madden* takes the whole game up to a whole new level. Even by Electronic Arts' own high standards, it makes the 3DO



1 An exclusive hot-off-the-press pic of PlayStation *Madden* in action. Good, isn't it? 2 Number 96: Bob 'Pointy' McLintock, fictitious tight-end. 3 Goodyear blimp's-eye view of some made-up stadium or other.



1 Just in case the earlier *FIFA* shot didn't impress, here's another taste of EA's Virtual Stadium. 2, 3 The original *EA Hockey* only had a vertically scrolling pitch - now you have the luxury of multiple roving camera views.



version look out of date.

Again, the Virtual Stadium plays host to the gridironic activities, providing a televisual representation of the action. And to reinforce the full 'Sunday afternoon ballgame' feeling - and for the first time ever - there are two commentators. John Madden's drawling inanities are interspersed by the silky discourse of pundit Pat Summerall. These two are something of a double act on the Fox network, and their badinage is replicated here with a host of newly sampled speech and new film footage. There's even a pitch-side reporter who passes comment on injuries, fouls, team morale and the like.

Heightened stadium ambience

Down on the pitch - or 'grass' as the Americans say - the game has been aesthetically kicked into touch. Real NFL players have been motion captured and turned into detailed sprites, each with their own shadows.

Madden's gameplay has been enhanced and will no doubt be the best American Football game you can buy - until *Madden '97*, of course.

EA Canada's Virtual Stadium technology crops up anew in PlayStation *NHL '96*. This massively popular ice hockey game has once more been revamped with fresh artwork, improved player sprites and a shiny new virtual ice rink - in fact it's almost unrecognisable from earlier episodes of the series.

During the game you can choose from over a dozen different camera views, providing broadcast-style coverage of the action in a similar fashion to *FIFA '96*. And the TV effect is augmented by the addition of an announcer's voice introducing each game and remarking on the state of play - fouls, substitutions and so on. A new array of sampled sound-effects have been added too, with context-sensitive crowd noises enhancing the ambience to almost unbearable proportions. Sort of.

The luxury of CD storage has enabled EA's designers to include a full encyclopaedia of player stats for the more obsessive ice hockey

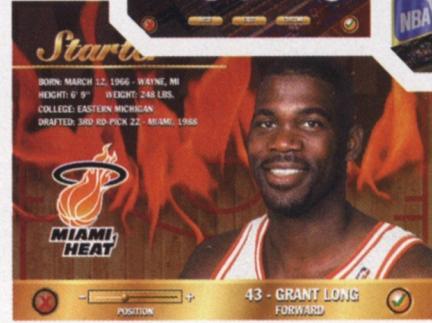
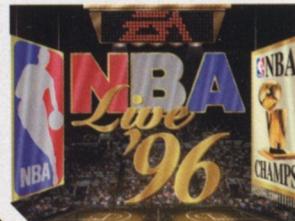
fans. Another new feature is the trading options, whereby you can buy and sell players on the open market to build up your dream team.

Alterations to hands-on gameplay include longer penalties - there's the threat of five minutes in the sin-bin for transgressors - and work on the player intelligence has also resulted in cleverer goalies and better defence... sadly. Now the computer's gonna be a bitch to beat as well.

On a less icy note, *NBA Live '96* is EA's entry into the burgeoning basketball market, along with SCE's *Total NBA '96* (reviewed on pages 20-21) and *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition* from Acclaim (reviewed on pages 68-69). With all these officially-licensed titles, the NBA surely must be raking it in.

Details on EA's game are sketchy at the moment but, as with all its titles, you can expect plenty of stats, hi-res options screens and nicely animated players performing in a Virtual Arena (it's not quite stadium-sized) environment.

NBA Live '96 is due for release early next year, so we'll keep you posted.



The only shots of EA's NBA-endorsed basketball game so far are these glorious hi-res intro and option screens. However, it doesn't take a genius to take the pictures of *NHL '96*, make the ice brown and throw in some less-padded players. Voila! A basketball game.

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Polygon punch-up

NAMCO's beat 'em up *Tekken* is one of the most eagerly awaited PlayStation titles. *PSM* takes an early look



Those with a penchant for a punch-up should be gripping their roll of Band Aid and inserting the gum shield with haste. The 3D beat 'em up is almost ready to lay us by two falls and a submission, and Namco's *Tekken* is shaping to enter the ring as

undisputed champion of the pugnacious genre.

Tekken, already a coin-op performer of some renown, is set to emerge with the oft-abused strains of 'arcade-perfect' ringing in its ears, the conversion likely to match its taller, token-consuming cousin in every respect. The PlayStation's ability to

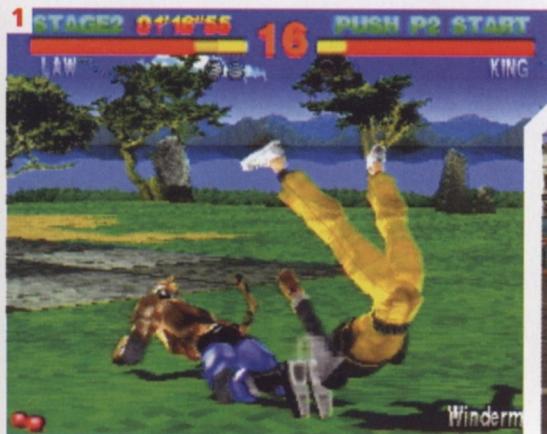


smoothly handle 3D graphics is a significant step forward for the beat 'em up – a genre often derided for its button-bashing, numbskull image, yet it remains one of the most complex and competitive forms of computer entertainment.

Fighting talk

The visual allure of the 3D beat 'em up is likely to attract a whole new type of gamer because it feels so much more physical than its 2D counterparts. Long regarded as the domain of the teenage male, the development in game graphics should ensure an older audience leans forward and takes note. Despite the negative publicity which surrounds beat 'em ups, one cannot deny that there is much pleasure to be gained from kicking your mate's texture-mapped butt across Fiji.

Tekken looks stunning, crafted with 3D polygon graphics and backed by flat parallax backgrounds. There are eight locations in which to engage in hostility – including the Acropolis, Venice and, somewhat bizarrely, Lake Windermere – while there are eight



[1], [2], [3] *Tekken* scores points over the coin-op, with a fine intro sequence which introduces the characters and shows off the PlayStation's technical splendour.

■ PUBLISHER:	SCE/Namco	■ DEVELOPER:	Namco	■ START DATE:	Early '94
■ RELEASE DATE:	November 10	■ ORIGIN:	Japan	■ COMPLETE:	100%
■ PRICE:	£45 - £50	■ STYLE:	Beat 'em up	■ PLAYERS:	One or two



1 King is Tekken's finest whirlwind tosser. 2 Yoshimitsu, mind that banana skin... doh! 3 Plimsoll-clad Kazuya lays down the Law. 4 Jack falls for the old 'kick him in the kneecap' routine. Heihachi (5) is one of the boss fighters, only available to the skilled gamer. 6 Jack prepares to piledrive a touchdown.

combatants from which to choose, though a host of extra characters can be accessed by the more cunning pugilists. Namco has also dropped in the old arcade blaster *Galaga* which appears while the game is loading, and if you can eliminate every ship, you're rewarded with the ultimate fighter.

Uniquely, *Tekken* uses the joypad's four main buttons by limb – one for each arm and leg – which supposedly enables the gamer intuitively to sock the very life out of his opponent. And the use of one button per limb, in theory, makes it easier to learn the special moves, of which there are many.

Each character displays different attributes, both physically and technically, so while some of the



fighters are huge and possess an enormous punch or kick, others are more versatile, quick-limbed and easier to get to grips with – very much standard form for a beat 'em up. The game can be viewed from a variety of angles and at some points during bouts the camera angle switches to ensure gamers get the best possible view of the action.

The Japanese PlayStation version of *Tekken* has been available for some five months and it is one of the biggest selling titles. So with the PAL release imminent, can *Tekken* outmanoeuvre the infamous prizefighters *Toshinden*, *Mortal Kombat 3* and *Street Fighter II*? Next month, we'll be bashing the pads until our fingers are raw, to deliver the definitive review.



Play One cannot deny that there is much pleasure to be gained from kicking your mate's texture-mapped butt across Fiji punch-up



Caught in the spotlight

It's been a while but **Cool Spot** is back, **redder and cooler** than ever. **PSM** went to **Virgin Interactive** in California for an early screening of its **celluloid-saturated** sequel



Mark Kelly, creator of Cool Spot. After a long career in the UK games industry, Mark now works at Virgin Inc in Irvine, California.

Making the transition from 16 to 32-bits can be a painful process, but Cool Spot – the blood red Strepsil-bodied hero of the 7-Up beverage – seems to have managed it with aplomb.

Cool Spot's journey to Hollywood began almost three years ago: once Spot's 2D exploits on the Mega Drive and Super Nintendo came to an end, his creator – **Mark Kelly** of Virgin Interactive – began work on a grander adventure with a cinematic theme. 'The first design spec was just Hollywood, Hollywood, Hollywood', he exclaims in his pleasing Scottish lilt. 'The mission statement from the company was "something wow!", "something different". It had to be big, bright, brilliant.'

The final storyline has Cool Spot meandering into a movie theatre and up to the projection room, where he tumbles headlong into the film spooling system. Dragged around the sprockets and cogs, he's eventually ejected (or rather projected) towards the silver screen and into the first of his cinematic escapades...

To differentiate this new Spottage from games of old, it was decided



1 Spot reprises the Indiana Jones cart ride. **2** An irate pirate catches Spot on the hop.



One of the bonus levels is a jeep-ride through 'Triassic Lark'. According to Mark Kelly, it's based on a famous film, but we're damned if we can see any link. Must be an obscure arthouse movie.



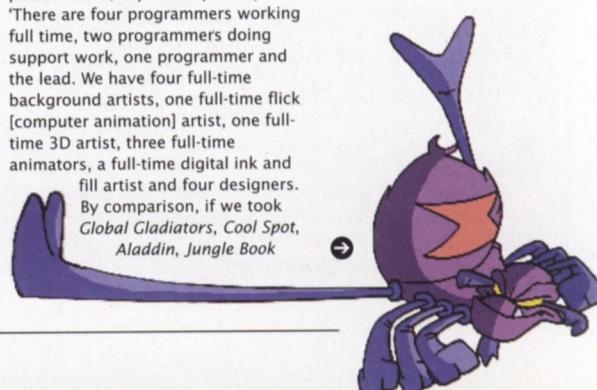
Okay, Spot Goes To Hollywood may not be exactly on the same scale as Costner's **Waterworld**, but as a piece of gamemaking it's certainly a major undertaking

that an extra dimension should be added. Mark initially began coding on the Super Nintendo, producing the diagonal scrolling routines, but it soon became apparent that the 16-bit market wouldn't be around to see out the project.

At around the same time Virgin Inc received a PlayStation development kit – one of the first in the US, in fact – and *Cool Spot* went 32-bit. Mark and his team spent the next six months getting used to the new hardware, and at that point it was agreed that he would take charge of the project, co-ordinating the efforts of what was turning into

a seriously large operation.

'*Spot Goes To Hollywood* is an 18-person team', says Mark proudly. 'There are four programmers working full time, two programmers doing support work, one programmer and the lead. We have four full-time background artists, one full-time flick [computer animation] artist, one full-time 3D artist, three full-time animators, a full-time digital ink and fill artist and four designers. By comparison, if we took *Global Gladiators*, *Cool Spot*, *Aladdin*, *Jungle Book*



■ PUBLISHER:	Virgin Interactive	■ DEVELOPER:	In-house	■ START DATE:	August '94
■ RELEASE DATE:	March '96	■ ORIGIN:	USA	■ COMPLETE:	70%
■ PRICE:	TBA	■ STYLE:	Platform game	■ PLAYERS:	One

Adventure world

In the first of Spot's escapades, he runs the gauntlet of adventure movies. Mystic ruins, jungle creatures and crumbling temples await...



With Cool Spot trapped in the big screen, the roll of film transports him through a mystic portal into the world of adventure movies. Here he's thrown into a series of *Indiana Jones*/Doc Savage/Tarzan-style levels, full of ferocious animals and unfriendly natives. Spot has to avoid the unwanted advances of missile-gobbling statues, enormous rolling boulders, crumbling rope bridges, precipitous chasms and a roller-coaster mine cart ride.



Horror world

The domain of Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi and Vincent Price provide the setting for Spot's trip through the filmic world of the un-dead.



Cool Spot's cinematic antics take a turn for the worst when he's carted through a spine-chilling graveyard to the place where bad horror movies reside. Creepy gothic castles and spook-infested crematoriums lie in wait for the walking stop light. And when Spottie jumps on a witch's broom, one of the levels turns into a Zaxxon-style scroll shoot 'em up. This world also boasts a selection of see-through spooks which float eerily through the dimly-lit corridors. Cripes.



Pirate world

Hurled forcibly into the genre of pirate movies, Cool Spot has to contend with bad acting and endless cries of 'Ahoy there, me hearties!'

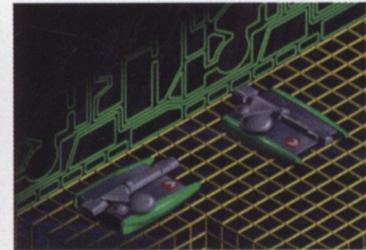


The endless roll of film carries Spot under an ominous bridge marked with the skull 'n' crossbones. At which point the film ends, leaving Cool Spot plummeting towards a pirate vessel far below. Here, CS has to battle through deck after deck of decidedly un-pathetic sharks, toothy walruses and the occasional buccaneer. At one stage Spot has to ride a bucking-bronco cannon, and also has to rely on his lumberjack skills, walking on floating barrels.



Sci-Fi world

Spot's final movie destination is the realm of silver robots, spaceships made from old aircraft kits, and the inevitable mad scientist.



The rolling celluloid strip eventually carries Strepil-head far into the future where men are men, women are also men, and robots look like they're made from cardboard sprayed silver. Shaped like men. Among the dangers awaiting our blood-reddied hero are aliens (like out of *Alien*), predators (like out of *Predator*) and computer-generated *Tron* tanks. Spot also suffers the indignity of being 'beamed' from one place to another by low-budget *Star Trek* transporters.





1 Buddah me! A talking statue. **2** Spot makes some unwanted acquaintances. **3** Felled by a tree. **4** Spot stands out in the monochrome world of B&W movies. Roll 'em!



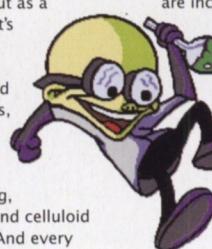
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and *Lion King* – this is bigger than all of them combined.'

Lead programmer on the project is Heather Barclay who has previously worked at Origin, Electronic Arts and LucasArts, although the guts of the game is Mark's invention: 'I created this engine,' he says, 'which has been used for *Lion King*, *Pinocchio*, *Global Gladiators*, *Cool Spot* and *Jungle Book* – and that engine was altered to be isometric and 3D. Heather's taken that and modified it, and I direct her. She works at it and I co-ordinate the whole thing. I don't so much produce the project as direct it, like a movie, keeping it on the straight and narrow.'

Okay, *Spot Goes To Hollywood* may not exactly be on the same scale as Costner's *Waterworld*, but as a piece of game-making, it's certainly a major undertaking. There are 48 different levels spread over seven themed areas, including Adventure, Horror, Sci-Fi, and a Black and White area – complete with King Kong, monochrome graphics and celluloid scratches and glitches. And every single one of those levels has between four and six secret rooms, making some 200 in all.

But it's not just case of having 48 different sets of backgrounds, as Mark is keen to point out: 'We have in excess of 120 characters in the game, all with their own program and unique intelligence. We have a whole range of play mechanics – things like running on barrels in water. You ride a witch's broom through the graveyard where it becomes like a *Viewpoint*-style shooting game. In the Adventure section we have the mine cart ride, in Triassic Lark you drive a jeep while



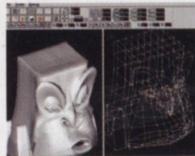
Hollywood bound...

Spot's journey from drawing board to small screen is a long and arduous one. *PSM* takes the quick route.



Storyboards

Initial ideas are sketched out and then turned into storyboards to guide the artists.



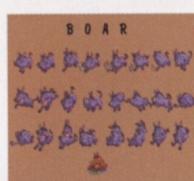
3D models

Many of the scenic elements play an active role: these are modelled and rendered in 3D.



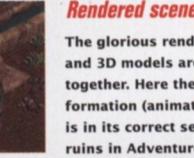
3D animation

The completed statues and gargoyles are then brought to life in *Animation Master* running on a PC.



2D animation

All of the enemy animations are sketched by hand. Line drawings are then scanned into a PC and inked in on screen.



Rendered scenery

The glorious rendered backgrounds and 3D models are composited together. Here the crumpling rock formation (animation sequence above) is in its correct setting, amid temple ruins in Adventure World.



The finished article

Here you can see how all the different elements come together. On the right we have the spitting statues in a suitably Aztec location; on the left Spot is attacked by a menagerie of hand-drawn and animated creatures.



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Hot out of the States enters a pile-driving, slapstick beat 'em up, newly converted from its powerful coin-op counterpart



Ah. Wrestlers. Um... okay, from right to left we have E. Honda, Steven Seagal, Big Daddy, some porn star, that bloke what's going out with Paula Yates, um, an old Roy Orbison, aha! I know this one: it's The Undertaker. And finally we have Tim Curry out of Stephen King's *Dreadful film*; crap ending.

S

ome say it's fixed. Some say it's crap. But some say that the World Wrestling Federation is the most exciting sporting pastime since, er, sex. Really? Well, whichever belief you favour there's no denying that Acclaim's new licensed beat 'em up based, funnily enough, on the flamboyant antics of the WWF, is neither fixed nor crap. As for the sex reference, better that we quickly pass over that.

Mirroring the action evident in the hit coin-op machine currently wowing arcade audiences, *WWF Wrestlemania*

saturizes the sport in a refreshingly jovial fashion. Featuring eight of the WWF's most prodigious wrestlers (although *PSM* was sorry to see our hero, Hulk Hogan, omitted from the line-up) the action sees the digitised characters performing pile-drivers, back-breakers, half-nelsons and flying kicks with astounding speed. But the addition of fireballs, dragon punches and plasma bolts comes somewhat as a pleasant surprise.

Breaking the mould from Acclaim's previous WWF offerings seen on various other platforms, *Wrestlemania* is the first one to feature special

moves more akin to the likes of *Street Fighter II*. By diversifying the gameplay in this fashion, Acclaim has produced a more playable and certainly more enjoyable WWF product and one which will stand proud against the plethora of other beat 'em ups available for the PlayStation.

So what's on offer, then? Plenty of pummelling, that's for sure. Players have an abundance of moves at their disposal, including the standard thumps and kicks, while there's also an opportunity to master combination moves as well as those devious special attacks.

Macho machine

The most alluring aspect of the game is its ability to turn the macho spectacle into something you're more likely to see in a circus, with plenty of horseplay and humorous elements on show. For example, a baseball bat miraculously appears from Shaun Michaels' shorts while Razor Ramon favours a sword. Doink, on the other hand, slaps and kicks with over-sized gloves and comic boots, while Yokozuna has a frightening belly-butt. Naturally the exaggerated Benny Hill-style speed adds to the entertainment value immensely.

And that, as they say, is that. A good deal of ludicrous action, all the flamboyant antics that you'd expect from the theatrical stars of the WWF and, for the real fans, you can even delight in the sounds of each wrestler's official theme tune. Now, what happened to that volume control...



There are a variety of throws in *WWF*. [1] The back-breaker. [2] The pile-driver. [3] The Klins-mann.



[1] Ooh-ow-ow-ow. That looks painful.
 [2] Oh My God! That man's head has exploded. Call for an... um... bucket.
 [3] Looking more like a scene from *Poltergeist* than a 'friendly' bout of WWF, The Undertaker sort of dissolves in a pool of flaming lava. What a showman.

■ PUBLISHER:

Acclaim

■ DEVELOPER:

Sculptured Software

■ START DATE:

January '95

■ RELEASE DATE:

December

■ ORIGIN:

USA

■

COMPLETE:

99%

■ PRICE:

£39.99

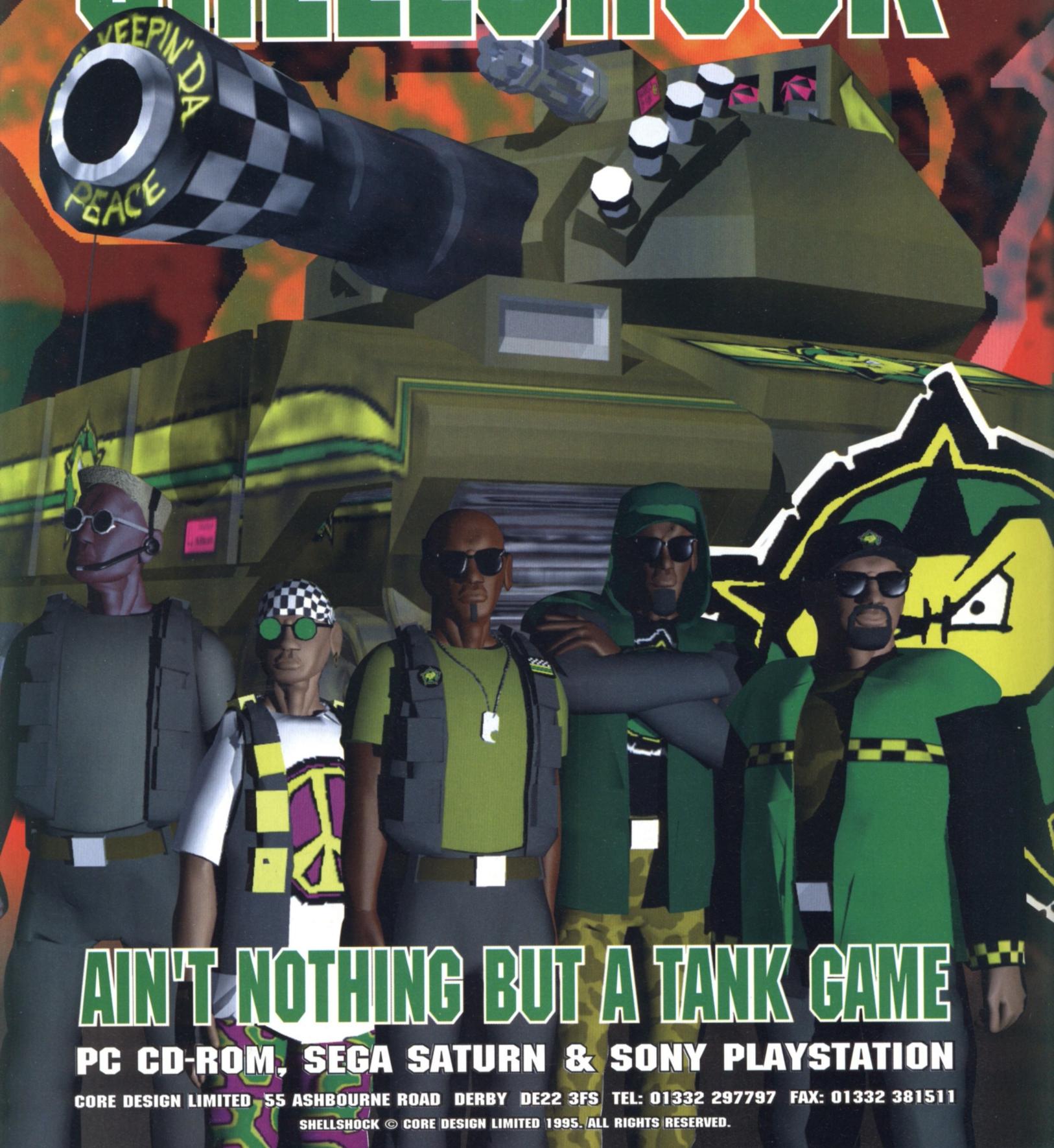
■ STYLE:

Beat 'em up

■ PLAYERS:

Four

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Made in Britain

PSM takes a **lingering look** at the wealth of **homegrown** titles you can expect to be playing in a few months time.

Does Britannia rule the new wave?

Britain has long been the source of the most talented coders in the business, re-inventing jaded old games styles or, more often, generating new ones. You may not have heard of ageing classics like *Elite*, *The Sentinel*, *Lords Of Midnight*, *Populous*, *Exile*, *Lemmings*, *Sensible Soccer* and *Syndicate*, but they have served to mark Britain as a reliable source of inventive, innovative and ingenious software.

Since the early days of the eight-bit Spectrum and Commodore 64, British coders have been designing original games that pushed the machines to their technical limits. But now the days of the single programmer locked away in his garret,

writing every single piece of code, composing the music and hand-drawing every character and sprite, have gone. Pre-rendered intros, studio soundtracks, multi-megabytes of data... Game production is now the domain of the dedicated team – supported by a network of high-end PCs or Silicon Graphics workstations, and with million-dollar budgets: it's now *very big business*.

The advent of cartridge production took away a lot of innovation due to the financial risk involved; with hundreds of thousands of pounds at stake simply in purchasing stock, software houses preferred to churn out safe, predictable, *saleable* titles – and leave the risky weirdo stuff on the drawing board. But now with

CD as a reliable, cheap and easily duplicated medium, the risk is lessened: originality can make a welcome return.

Whether the growing commercialisation in the UK games market will have a marked effect on the quality and innovation of the software remains to be seen. What's certain is that the vast majority of UK software companies are seriously geared up for the PlayStation. Many bought their development kits from Sony well over a year ago and some projects have been two years in the making.

As you'd expect, **PSM** has been checking on their progress. We've travelled the length and breadth of this fair isle, unearthing the truth, in a bid to bring you the definitive list of UK-sourced games.



US Gold

US Gold's in-house development team, Silicon Dreams, is writing four sporting licensed Olympic PlayStation titles as you read - *Olympic Soccer*, *Olympic Basketball* and two athletics games, provisionally entitled *Sports One* and *Sports Two*. All four have been motion captured but they won't surface until next year, which fortunately is an Olympic year.

Attention To Detail

ATD, in its shortened guise, is attending to three games on behalf of three publishers - US Gold, GTE Interactive and Activision. The games? One based on a cartoon of alleged renown; another, a secret 3D game; the third, an action/puzzle game.

Sony Computer Entertainment

SCE's first in-house project, *Total NBA '96*, gets the full PSM preview treatment on page 20. And, of course, you can view this sporting wonder in full on our glorious cover-mounted Demo Disc.

Sony Interactive Studios

Although it has undergone a recent name change, SIS (formerly known as Psygnosis) is continuing to keep its meticulous standards as sky-high as ever by unveiling a number of stunning PlayStation titles scheduled for imminent release. With *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby* already 'out there', we can now look forward to *Krazy Ivan* and *Assault Rigs*, the next two offerings in SIS's lengthy line-up, featured here. But the excitement doesn't end there. Still in early stages of development, we also have the incredible *PowerSports Soccer* as well as the curiously titled *G-Police* to look forward to in 1996. Sadly you'll have to wait until the next issue of PSM for more details.

Krazy Ivan

One of the SIS titles getting unfairly eclipsed by the grandeur of *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby* is *Krazy Ivan*. Set in the immediate future, *Krazy Ivan* is a balls-out shoot 'em up in which you control a thundering great war robot (like in those Japanese cartoons). The game started

about a year and a half ago as a project called *Ideal*, but changed tack last November.

In its current form *Krazy Ivan* - a rogue Russian war robot - has a mission to rid the world of 19 'Sentients' - intelligent robots that dominate different areas around the globe. Ivan's task is to infiltrate each area, destroy any drones that may attack, and defeat the ruling Sentient. The tactics come in utilising



the undulating terrain and different weapons to your best advantage.

An on-screen monitor stars the facial and vocal talents of Sara Stockridge - Vivien Westwood model and bit-part in *Interview With A Vampire* - who keeps you up to date with such things as the mission status, enemy locations and your impending destruction. Ivan will be going Krr-azy in November.

Assault Rigs

A 40-level, 3D tank-battler with a link mode for two-player head-to-head combat, would aptly describe *Assault Rigs*. And it does. Currently in development at SIS's Stroud office, the game harks back to the old *Atari Battlezone* coin-op. The gamer's objective is to trundle through the levels, gathering the required amount of red gems, and head for the exit.

The coders have cunningly added roaming and fixed gunmeisters to hinder your progress; but the tanksman can garner a variety of weapons, including bouncing ammo, quick-fire machine guns, lasers and guided missiles. Other



power-ups include camouflage and shields. The levels, without being ridiculously complex, contain hidden areas for the driver to explore.

Graphically, *Assault Rigs* is a somewhat bizarre mixture of the ornate, texture-mapped present together with some *Tron*-style retrogressive looking visuals on certain levels. It's still a couple of months from completion and certainly looks interesting, if not outstanding.

Still, those with PlayStation-owning friends and two copies of the game can indulge in a head-to-head.



Gremlin Interactive

Sheffield softco Gremlin Interactive is a growing concern, if you'll forgive the term. During the past couple of years it has expanded threefold from some 40 to 125 employees. The company is probably most famous for its *Premier Manager* series of football games and platform character Zool. But now it has the PlayStation firmly in its sights, with three titles nearing completion - *Actua Soccer*, *Actua Golf* and a top-down-viewed blast 'em up, *Loaded*.

Actua Soccer

Actua Soccer is a 3D arcade football game which uses the latest optical motion capture technology to create the animation. As luck would have it, Gremlin happens to have its own £250,000 motion capture studio. The studio has six cameras which track around 20 reflective markers attached to the limbs of an actor, and the



movements are then rendered by computer.

This enables the players to move realistically and allows for a host of different in-game views - in *Actua Soccer*'s case, you can customise the pitch view to suit your tastes. Gremlin brought in three Sheffield Wednesday players to perform the moves, so if the players can't pass a ball, you'll know why.

BBC football supremo Barry Davies supplies the commentary, and with 44 real international teams - each made up of 22 players - and the option to customise competitions, *Actua Soccer* sounds like a dream come true for footie fans. But of course, we await to see how it plays.



Loaded

Bucking the current trend for the first-person-perspective shoot 'em up (à la *Doom*), Gremlin has instead opted for an overhead view for its PlayStation blaster.



Set in a prison comprising 12 vertically stacked levels, *Loaded* doesn't think about strategy, nor does it pander to the whims of adventurous quest. Bullets, bombs and cacophonous explosions are the order of the day as you plunder through rooms, acquiring power-ups and generally eliminating anyone who steps in your path. This has got to be a good thing. We wait for release, come November.



Actua Golf

The second in Gremlin's PlayStation sports series is *Actua Golf*. Again, Gremlin has used the motion capture studio and a professional golfer has been chipped, putted and thwacked



through an array of strokes in order to capture the realistic 3D animation.

Software manager **Tim Heaton** explains how Gremlin uses the technology: 'The motion capture data we collect can be used to animate 3D models in rendering packages such as *3D Studio* and *Wavefront*, which we are doing in several games. Or it can be used 'direct' in the game engine, which is what we are doing in the *Actua* series of sports games.'

'This involves a large amount of data manipulation and changes in the logic and graphics engines and it's where we feel that we've made a major leap forward in game



technology. *Actua Golf* actually allows the golfer's swing to be seen from any angle, even with a moving 'camera'. Because it's easy to include extra motion once the system has been written, we also have the golfer picking the ball out of the hole - and cursing if he misses'.

Gremlin has included amateur

and professional tours so that the novice can lower his handicap gradually before moving into the big league. And those with friends can indulge themselves in the multi-player option. Still a fair way to go, though.

Codemasters

This software company's most famous title is the cutesome, overhead race-around-the-house game *Micro Machines*. And the splendid news is that *Micro Machines 3* is in the PlayStation oven and we can expect an Easter rising. Codemasters is also working on a tennis game but it's at least a year off completion, so you can exhale breath now.

Vivid Image

Vivid Image is currently revamping its successful cart-driving game, *Street Racer*, for release early next year. It's also working on a 3D action/adventure called *Hodja*, a project almost two years in development, which should hopefully surface next September.

Telstar

Record company develops PlayStation games shocker. Read all about it... From PJ and Duncan to PlayStation, Telstar tornadoes into view with three titles.

Lone Soldier, then. *Rambo*-esque rumbles in 3D, battle royal across continents and quelling the alien invasion. Anyway, Telstar reckons that 'the camera zooms around, catching the action, and there'll be many spot effects to give the man more character'. So there.

Arthurian legend abounds in *Excalibur* which, as you will no doubt be aware, is a sword. Anyway, the sword has gone and Merlin has designed that the recovery job is down to you. Action, adventure and strategy would be the name of the game if it wasn't *Excalibur*.

More swords in *Raven*, a 3D real-time battle sim set in the Middle Ages – but with the added bonus of catapults, crossbows and... what, no boiling oil? So what do you have to do, then? The premise is to defend or attack the game's 25 castles and you can lord it over 100 soldiers, send out spies, or simply set the wheels in motion and sit back and watch the action. It'll be a year, though, before we find out if *Raven* is anything to (slight cough) crow about.

Bullfrog

Bullfrog has recently been bought out by giants Electronic Arts for \$50m, enabling it to almost double in size and devote itself to producing next-generation software. After making its name on the Amiga, Bullfrog went on to produce a number of top-quality PC games which are now undergoing conversion to the PlayStation.

Theme Park

One of the most quality-consistent softcos is Guildford-based Bullfrog Productions, its most recent blockbuster being the multi-format, god-cum-



business simulation, *Theme Park*. The good news is that it's undergoing PlayStation transformation and promises to be a version which eclipses all others by a golden mile. The basic premise is to build a theme park and then attempt to make a profit. Included in the conversion is a feature which allows gamers to wander around their own 3D-rendered park as well as experience the rides themselves, which should be quite spectacular.



Syndicate Wars

Equally breathtaking should be *Syndicate Wars*, sequel to the classic mega-corporation battle game, *Syndicate*. Bullfrog has used light-sourcing techniques to portray realistic explosions and a 360° rotating view which makes it easier for the gamer to seek quarry. The emphasis will be on arcade action as opposed to out-and-out strategy. And with the promise of a link option, *Syndicate Wars* is one of the PlayStation's most eagerly awaited titles.



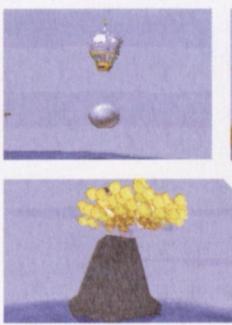
Magic Carpet

It's a flight simulator and a shoot 'em up with a smattering of god-esque strategy. You blast evil creatures and collect mana,



which is spell energy, a commodity enabling you to develop your gaming world and cast more spells. And you've got a fantastic rug on which to fly around so those that simply want to float around can head for the valleys for no reason whatsoever. It sounds bizarre. And it is. Undoubtedly.

Already a major success on the PC, the PlayStation version of *Magic Carpet* will feature enhanced graphics and fly that little bit quicker. Rejoice.



Hi-Octane

This futuristic racer received a mixed reception from the PC press a few months ago. And faced with tough competition, *Hi-Octane* will have to be pretty smart. You hotwheel along various courses in an armoured 'vehicle of tomorrow', unleashing vicious weaponry at your hapless opponents. Well, that's the general idea, anyway. Certainly the PlayStation version will run swifter and look better.



Core Design

Core Design, the most famous software company in Derby, is preparing a clutch of PlayStation titles for the autumn and is working on a number for next year. We fearlessly enter Derby to bring you this special report...

Blam! Machinehead

Canada, virus, nuclear device, imminent destruction. It can only mean one thing. Yes, it's a plot for a computer game: a 3D strategic shoot 'em up with the ultimate objective - to blow up the deadly Machinehead. The



gamer's perspective is through the helmet visor of Dr Kimberley Stride, a woman strapped to a warhead by her evil sidekick, Oscar... Oh look, I can't go on with this. You wander around and shoot things through four missions, each with five objectives. The five environments encompass a variety of graphical styles as you head from city, through mountain, and on to wasteland, collecting weapons by the barrel load. We look forward to early next year when *Blam!* surfaces.



Thunderhawk 2

Oh, for undulating, fractal-mapped 3D terrains and a fabulous amount of generated polygons. Oh, to strafe little men and enemy tanks from the vantage point of your powerful combat helicopter...

Thunderhawk 2 thankfully combines the two facets, with the emphasis very much on arcade action rather than strategic hovering and the 'virtual' cockpit. Grand, wethinks, but the month of November shall all reveal.



Shellshock

Shellshock, a futuristic (well, it's set in 1997) 3D texture-mapped, first-person-perspective tank shoot 'em up which harks back to the old Atari game *Battlezone*. For the plot, read *The A-Team*. Five guys called Da Wardenz - they're from Brooklyn, apparently, although the soundtrack is somewhat inappropriately rapped by a San Francisco 49'er (an American football team of alleged repute) -



are troubleshooters fighting injustice and bad-assed mother funsters to boot. And you (Da Wardenz) have to serve a tour of duty, trundling through various missions around the world while William Floyd raps about 'homers' and 'Mr T' and the like.

PSM took a sneak glance, and found the action smoothly agreeable. Unlike *The A-Team*, though, you can actually kill people in *Shellshock*, which seems rather a shame. It's always nice to see someone get blown 20 feet in the air and hit the ground with a thud before rising gingerly and dusting down his jacket. Never mind, eh? Anyway, perhaps the best news of all is that there's a link mode which allows you to go head to head against one of your bitchin' bro's.



Elite Systems

It's helicopters and football all the way for Midlands softster Elite, with its forthcoming titles *Aftershock* and *Onside*.

Aftershock concentrates its efforts on helicopters, adding guns for good measure. The mission? To destroy the Hex organisation which is hell bent on the earth's destruction - by means foul, of course. Stir in a speedy 3D engine, add a CD soundtrack and play 1-2 players - two via a split-screen.

Onside combines the two main facets of the football game - arcade action and management. Not only can you boot the old bladder up and down, you can run the team, transfer players, oversee the finances and players' training - and the talented among you should be able to burst the onion bag now and again.

Sensible Software

Have you heard of Sensible Software's footie game, *Sensible Soccer*? Three-quarters of a million have been sold around Europe on a variety of platforms. Not bad, eh? The company's musing over a PlayStation version but it certainly won't happen for a long time, and indeed may not happen at all.

But we can proudly inform you of a couple of titles on the march. *Sex, Drugs And Rock 'n' Roll* is a rock star role-playing game, and *Have A Nice Day* (™ probably) combines action with strategy, but don't expect to see it for another year.

• **NMS**

The attempts at replicating pinball in computer games often have been met with some disdain from the pub-playing silver ball cognoscenti. You simply cannot reproduce the sheer physical feel of pinball – the way you shift and nudge the table, the way you can be 'at one' with the ball. No sir. But can it ever be done?

Midland coder NMS is working on the first ever player's-eye 3D pinball sim, *Tilt*, which should blow every other effort to date out of the water. The company completely dismantled an arcade machine and has studied and recreated the details as well as adding sub-games and cut scenes. *Tilt* is due for release later this year and may well redefine the computer pinball genre. Stem thy frothy drool!

Warner Interactive

The PlayStation will not be short of football games, for sure. Rage Software is in the throes of finishing the latest incarnation of *Striker* – now with motion-captured animation and including all of Europe's international teams. As in *Actua Soccer*, *Striker* has a plethora of camera angles, and interestingly, an indoor arena which reverberates to the sound of squeaking trainers – think of that time you watched table tennis on *Grandstand*. We'll have a full in-depth gander, next issue.

Time Warner Interactive

Back in the olden days, huge, lumbering beasts wandered the earth. Some of them didn't like each other very much, and often petty bickering would ensue ('No, Oasis are definitely better than Blur... etc'), which then turned into ugly squabbles. TWI brings us exclusive action from those days.

Primal Rage

A beat 'em up involving seven dinosaurs, pure and simple. Each of the blighters has an individual combat style and up to 70 moves can be accessed. Already a coin-op hit, *Primal Rage* faces stiff competition in the pugilist stakes, with *Tekken*, *Toshinden*, *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat 3* preparing to enter the ring. However we look forward to the ensuing rumble with some glee. The gloves are off.



Mandscape

One of Mandscape's platform characters once stood in a local by-election (Rt Hon Alfred Chicken, or something) – a noteworthy, if somewhat superficial exercise. Anyway, to matters-PlayStation and Mandscape's two forthcoming UK-coded titles. One involves spaceships, the other a horned rat with a shadow. Onwards...

CyberSpeed

CyberSpeed is a futuristic spaceship racing game with 15 courses to race, split between five worlds, and en route you gather pick-ups for weaponry and pace. The ships – eight to choose from, don't you know – are attached to the tracks by a guidance beam, but after a sneak preview PSM reckons *CyberSpeed* has a way to go to move alongside *Wipeout*.

Still, *CyberSpeed* affords TV replays, special effects and even advertisements as well as a link mode. A good thing, probably.



Warhammer

A dramatic title, *Warhammer: The Shadow Of The Horned Rat*. And it's a fantasy-role-playing strategy game in 3D, for those who demand intimate detail. Order units of elves to fight dwarfs and orcs. Plot a righteous track to victory. Fly the mighty dragon to Timbuctoo. Oh, all right, that bit's a lie. Anyway, fail and you 'INVITE THE DEATH OF THE WORLD'. So don't, right?

The Gouraud-shaded landscapes rotate 360° and the sprites are modelled and rendered on Silicon Graphics workstations. You get a whole host of troops to command, the battles taking place in real time.

It will be interesting to see if



Warhammer, a traditional PC strategy game, can leap console-ward with comfort and whether there is a large market for this style of game. Release date? Fawke's rear shall warm be. All right, November.

Team 17

After championing the Amiga home computer for many years, Team 17 has spread its wings into Console Land and is currently developing four PlayStation titles. All of which leads us neatly to this...

Worms

'A quirky war game involving drills, bungees, rocket launchers, guns, ropes and worms', would seem an apt opener when discussing the merits of *Worms*. Up to four platoons of four worms battle across a profusion of landscapes with the simple object of eliminating the other slithery hermaphrodites. Up to 16 can play at once (multiworm) and the Worm is expected to turn later in the year.



Witchwood

Witchwood contents itself with the arcade adventure genre, combining joypad manoeuvring



with RPG puzzles. The plot is of the evil-witch-casting-spell-over-wholesome-community-and-only-you-can-save-them variety. And with a thousand locations through which to wade and enemies, spells and treasure with which to contend, it's doubtful you'll be home in time for tea. The hungry will have to wait until next Easter, however, when *Witchwood* emerges from a shadowy copse. Which wouldn't, ahem, be a bad thing.



Rollage

Rollage is a texture-mapped 3D racing game with 10 vehicles and 20 courses, providing a variety of terrain for the gamer –

including grassland, snow (slippy-slidey, probably) and even, bizarrely, a multi-storey car park. The car park will remain empty until next year, though.

Allegiance

South American drugs cartels rarely feature in games. Not so *Allegiance*, for the gamer is an agent with 10 missions to solve

and a dry Martini in every town. Viewed first-person and set in real time, *Allegiance* is an action-cum-strategy affair and is shelf-bound for early '96.

MicroProse

The majority of MicroProse's titles are developed in the States and released under the banner of the US parent company, Spectrum Holobyte. However, more and more games are being conceived and programmed here in good 'ole Blighty, including the top PC conversion *X-Com: Enemy Unknown* which is reviewed on page 70. Consequently, there are plans to bring *X-Com: Terror From The Deep* to a PlayStation near you some time in 1996, and we have heard rumours that MicroProse's major PC hit, *Star Trek: The Next Generation - A Final Unity*, is already on the drawing boards. But for now, let's talk about the present...

Gunship 2000

One of MicroProse's most successful titles is the compelling helicopter sim *Gunship 2000*. The game should hopefully hit the shelves some time in the spring and be crammed with all the subtle gameplay nuances that made the original incarnations so playable.

Basically it's your usual grab 'n' go flight sim, weighted down with numerous combat options for the anorak fliers if required. Control of the craft is super-

friendly – grab your pad and up and away you go. Then you are immediately thrust into the heart of the action, with enemy craft zooming in from all directions, pounding you with deadly fire.

Gunship 2000 is graphically stunning too, with acres of undulating terrain rolling off towards the horizon, dissected by weaving gullies. Also expect to see some great visual effects which will surely enhance the atmosphere of what has already proved itself as a classic game.



Millennium

It's never the year 1995. It can be 1997, sure, but more often it's 2000 and something. And in *Defcon 5*, it's a full-on leap to 2205. Mega corporations are at war and as a cyber-nerd (corks!), your task is to install defence software at a base under threat from the might of the Tyron Weapons Division. In simple terms – read strategic shoot 'em up, combining first-person-perspective blasting with adventuresome clue seeking. Rendered graphics, FMV sequences and 15 music tracks make up the caboodle. *Defcon 5* is Millennium's most expensive and ambitious project to date and should be finished by Christmas.

Deadline, meanwhile, is an isometric-viewed strategy affair in which you take control of a crack force of siege busters. Think of the SAS, and you're about there. The game is played in real time – so, for instance, your brief could be to take out the terrorists and save the hostages in an embassy in less than two hours, while rescuing the next door neighbour's cat from a tree. Well, perhaps. A host of missions are included. Some are set at night, which means that you'll have to wear those night-vision goggles that have been lying in the cupboard for an age.

'Spectacular, gut-wrenching and enormous fun to fly but... *Wipeout* lacks passion'. Could SIE's futuristic racer be on course for a kicking? Page 58.

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PlayStation

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Y

es, we know it's only page 45, but by now you should have a pretty clear idea of whether you actually like *The Official PlayStation Magazine*. Or perhaps not.

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The Lexicon on of Gaming Terminology

You'll need the **special passwords**

if you're to gain admission into the **cyber-realm** of the PlayStation.
Read on and **gain enlightenment...**

ARCADE

Ordinarily a dingy, airless building – often underground, for some reason – run by a rotund, sweaty man with one good arm. This is where coin-ops are found in great numbers, so watch your funds should you dare to enter. Also referred to as an 'amusement arcade', which is odd, as many of the players seem to be swearing and looking decidedly unhappy.

ARCADE-PERFECT

► When a game is converted from coin-op to console, reviewers often try to impress the reader by stating the game is 'arcade-perfect' – inferring that what you see on your TV is identical to that seen on the arcade machine. More often than not, this is cretinous hyperbole, as it's very hard to fit a £20,000 coin-op into a £200 console (although with the PlayStation, this phrase is increasingly bang on).



BEAT 'EM UP

▲ A clumsy phrase coined to describe the genre of boxing, wrestling and fighting games made popular by the likes of *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat*. Beat 'em ups provide an arena for two players to beat the living crap out of their on-screen alter egos. Beat 'em ups do little to endear videogames to the older generation.

BIT

A 'bit' is the term used for data manipulated by electronic transistor circuits. A bit exists as one of two states – 1 (on) or 0 (off) – and it is these changing states that perform mathematical calculations.

BYTE

A byte is a collection of bits – like 01101001. In a system like the PlayStation, each byte is eight bits long.

COIN-OP

▼ As in 'coin-operated machine' or arcade machine. These are the big things that live by the seaside and eat your money when you go on holiday. Coin-ops have long been the source of some of the best console games, as they are often converted down to the home formats. With the advent of super-consoles like PlayStation, some coin-ops actually contain console hardware and so the conversions can be rightly described as 'arcade-perfect'.

COMPOSITE VIDEO

One of the many ways of connecting games machines to TVs – and one of the poorest quality. Composite video employs phono plug connectors, which most TVs support on the front under a moveable flap device.



ENGINE

Normally used in reference to a graphics routine developed by a programmer, such as a special '3D engine'.

FULL-MOTION VIDEO

Or FMV. The generic term for video footage pulled off CD. It's regularly used to pad out the gameplay with lots of laborious film clips, starring B-grade movie actors, which you're forced to sit through over and over again. It's also used to provide a fantastic intro sequence – before the shitty in-game graphics begin.

GOURAUD SHADING

A method of colouring polygons so that the intensity of the hue increases across the face of the polygon. Invented

by a Frenchman called Henri Gouraud – we think.

HOLограм

Once the generic name for the pictures of Shakespeare on your credit card, the word is now (wrongly) associated with all manner of SF-related chicanery, including apparently solid people wandering around doing things, and generally being most un-hologram-like.

IMMERSIVE RIDES

Like *The Imaginator* at the Trocadero. A peripheral vision-filling screen of fast-moving video tied to hydraulically-driven seating to impart the feeling of inertia and momentum. A cross between a roller-coaster and VR, really.

INTERNET

The global communications network of networks – also known as the net. Many millions of computers are all connected together over the phone lines, allowing 'net surfers' to access billions of megabytes of information about almost every subject known to man – primarily Star Trek and porn; although the latter is a good deal harder to download than the former.

ISOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE

Scrolling games are usually viewed straight-on, from overhead, or by using a sort of three-quarters, slightly-above view. The correct term is isometric perspective – like in technical drawing.

KILOBYTE

Or Kb. A kilobyte is 1,024 bytes. Simple as that.

LASER

Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. A device that generates a concentrated beam of coherent light, and is used to read the CD in your PlayStation. Contrary to popular belief, lasers cannot blow up aircraft or be trained on entire population centres from orbit. Yet.

MEGABIT

Or Mbit. Equal to one million bits. Often used to describe the size of cartridge games, since 24Mbits sounds more impressive than 3Mb.

MEGABYTE

Shortened to Mb. Equivalent to 1,024 Kb or 1,048,576 bytes. Or an awful lot of bits.

MOTION CAPTURE

▼ A system which literally captures the motion of a person or creature, producing a dataset that can be used in conjunction with sprites or polygons to reproduce realistic, lifelike animation. There are two species of motion capture technology in use: an optical method, which employs cameras, and one that uses electromagnetic... things.



MULTIMEDIA

The complex meld of words, sound and moving pictures into an informative, entertaining audio-visual experience. The alternative view is that it's half way between a book and a TV. Only you can't take a computer to bed or get the lads round to watch a 12-inch monitor.

NTSC

National Television Standards Committee – the TV standard used in the US and Japan. Unlike the UK PAL system, it displays a 525-line picture at 30 frames per second. Often scathingly referred to as 'Never Twice the Same Colour'.

OPERATING SYSTEM

The program that manages a computer system, whether it's



PLATFORM GAME

► Used to describe games with platforms (ledges, floors, walkways, cliffs, etc) providing the player's character with things to walk on, jump up to or leap across. One of the first truly 3D platform games is the innovative *Jumping Flash*, which is reviewed this very issue. Page 78, in fact.

PARALLAX SCROLLING

Imagine looking through a train window: the graffiti-strewn houses covered in satellite dishes next to the track appear to move past more quickly than the buildings in the distance. This perception of depth is replicated by having different layers of background graphics moving at different rates.

PIXEL

Short for picture element, a pixel represents the smallest point on the screen. In high-res mode, the PlayStation displays a screen made up of 640 pixels by 480 pixels – a total of 307,200 altogether.

POLYGON

An overused and much-abused name for the basic element of a 3D model. In the case of the PlayStation, each polygon is a triangle, so a cube is made up of 12 polygons – two for each square face and six squares to make the cube. Everything these days is polygons.

RENDERED

► Actually means 'drawn by computer'. Generally used in reference to 3D graphics produced on high-end workstations, like the massively powerful machines made by Silicon Graphics.

RAM

Random Access Memory. This is the part of the PlayStation into which the game data is loaded. This memory can be used and re-used, just like a human memory – and not that of a goldfish.

ROM

Read-Only Memory. These silicon chips are 'burnt' with specific information – like the PlayStation's boot-up sequence and logo. ROMs are single-minded: once they're made, they can't learn or remember anything else. The equivalent of brainwashing someone.

RPG

Short for 'role playing game'. Previously the realm of anorak-clad dice-throwers and lovers of Tolkien, PlayStation RPGs are less nerdy.

SCROLLING

The technical term for flat, 2D graphics that slide past. Background scenery can scroll horizontally, vertically, diagonally and sometimes in a variety of directions. Hence related terms, like vertically-scrolling shoot 'em up.

SCART

Otherwise known as Euroconnector or Peritel. This is that weird pointy lead that connects TVs and videos. Games machines often come with a Scart lead, so that you spend ages fumbling round the back of the TV trying to plug the bugger in.

SHOOT 'EM UP

Another misnomer, as the things you shoot (alien ships, creatures, etc) generally fall down – not up. In actuality, the background scenery scrolls down the screen, giving the illusion of your ship flying upwards.



SIM

Short for 'simulation'. Most often used as 'flight sim' or 'sport sim', where games endeavour to replicate the experience of, say, flying a plane or playing football. They very often fail.

SPRITE

The term used to describe a moveable graphical unit, drawn independently of the background. The PlayStation has powerful custom hardware which enables it to draw and manipulate up to 4,000 sprites on screen at once, each sprite made up of 64 pixels in an eight-by-eight configuration.

S-VIDEO

Another connecting-type implement – smaller and better than Scart, usually employed by Camcorders. The lead terminates in a small four-pin plug, and slots into the front of the TV set – if it's any good.

TEXTURE MAPPING

The process of drawing an image onto the flat sides of a polygonal shape. This is brilliantly demonstrated by the two versions of *Starblade* – one that uses the flat-shaded polygons of the coin-op, and the new souped-up PlayStation version with texture-mapped and shaded polygons.

VIRTUAL REALITY

VR has been embraced by every marketing company wishing to make their product sound up to date, or vaguely 'techno'. Real virtual reality is currently the domain of pharmaceutical companies, NASA and, according to the TV ads, Sellafield. VR is the wearing of stereo 'eyephones' which provide the viewer with a fully three-dimensional view of the 'virtual' (rendered by computer) world.

WIREFRAME

Most three-dimensional models are created first as wireframe models. These are displayed as points joined together by lines.

ZOOM

Now videogames have entered the domain of 3D, gamers can zoom in and zoom out of the action with a press of a button. Tenuous, admittedly, but we couldn't think of anything else beginning with 'z'.



Win!



Sony's latest 28-inch widescreen Dolby Pro Logic surround TV worth

£2,000!

The only, only way to enjoy the visual veracity of Sony's

PlayStation is on one of Sony's astonishing widescreen TVs. But to fully enjoy this audio-visual treat, you need the aural extravagance that is Dolby surround and the optical splendour that only Sony's from-the-future-and-beamed-back-to-present-day technology can bring.

Many PlayStation games, an increasing number of TV programmes and practically every VHS rental movie, has a Dolby surround soundtrack. Specially encoded signals allow the TV to play left and right channel sound, centre speaker dialogue and effects from two rear channels – you are, quite literally, surrounded by sound.

Anyway, sod the technicalities. This is a stonking telly and would look great in whatever domicile you inhabit. Yes, YOU. Because you, dear reader, have an equal chance of winning the aforementioned hardware in our open-to-everyone competition.

The facts...

- 28" (67cm) Super Trinitron widescreen with a vertically flat tube. Blacker blacks, greater contrast, generally a very lovely viewing medium. Smart.
- On-board PALplus decoder, enabling the set to receive real widescreen broadcasts. Certain programmes on TV are encoded in PALplus – a PALplus set expands the data to recreate a full widescreen picture without losing any of the screen resolution. Very clever.
- Smart mode, so that even normal (4:3) TV programmes fill the widescreen with the minimum of distortion. Also very clever.
- Twin-screen mode. A gamer's delight: you can have two separate pictures on screen at once, side-by-side, so that you and a mate can link up two PlayStations and play head-to-head with just the one telly! Suitably amazing.
- 100Hz Digital Plus. Instead of refreshing the screen at 25 frames per second, it does it at 50 frames per second for a thigh-smooth, flicker-free picture. A bit bloody good.
- Dolby Pro-Logic and Wider Spectrum sound. The ultimate in home cinema audio technology, offering full surround sound compatibility enhanced by Sony's proprietary sound system, with two centre speakers integrated into the cabinet. Sod me, this thing's a belter.
- Simple-to-use reversible Commander™ remote control with little buttons on one side and big buttons on the other. Well, castrate my dog and call him Wendy.

The compo...

To become the envy of your square-eyed friends, simply write the correct answers to the following questions on a postcard (or sealed envelope) along with your name and address.

Adhere a stamp to the surface of said missive and send it all to 'I Wish I Had A 28-incher', *The Official PlayStation Magazine*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

Entries arriving later than November 20 will be ignored, entries with the incorrect answers will be sniggered at, and anyone entering who already has a big telly (you know who we mean) shouldn't.

The Official PlayStation Magazine's decision in the matter is absolute and menacingly final. No correspondence will be entered into.

The questions...

1) When did the first colour TVs appear?

a) 1970 b) 1965 c) 1952 d) *Coronation Street*

2) When did Sony first introduce its vertically flat Trinitron tubes?

a) 1968 b) 1972 c) 1988 d) Albert Einstein

3) How many different sound signals does Dolby Pro Logic recreate?

a) 1 b) 5 c) 7 d) *Home And Away*

4) If normal TV has an aspect ratio (width by height) of 4:3, what is widescreen TV?

a) 16:9 b) 8:6 c) 1:5 d) 240 volts

5) How many scan lines make up a PAL TV picture?

a) 3 b) 250 c) 625 d) It's possible I'm reading the wrong *Trivial Pursuit* category.

PrePlay | Interplay line-up

Intertoy: Action & reaction

A veteran among developers, **Interplay** has been generating games for over 10 years. Keeping up with the striding advance of technology, the company is now working on a **swarm of PlayStation titles**. We take an inside look



Descent

Already a smash hit on the PC, *Descent* is an amazing 3D shoot 'em up similar in style to the storming phenomenon known as *Doom*, also released on the PC early last year. Adopting a first-person perspective, *Descent* thrusts you into the cockpit of a manipulative spacecraft which can be

rotated a full 360° around a pivotal point. This makes the game a true 3D experience as you fly through masses of weaving corridors at phenomenal speeds. *Doom*, in comparison,

offers a paltry 180° plane of movement, by and large keeping the levels on a horizontal axis.

The stages in *Descent* are a mass of oppressive texture-mapped corridors and trenches, dissected by tight corners, steep inclines, and treacherous declines. But it's not just a case of flying aimlessly through the labyrinth of levels, trying to make head or tail of your location while searching for the exit. There are hordes of enemy scum choking the narrow corridors and barring your progress, until you obliterate the filth with one of many outrageously powerful weapons. Ah, the satisfaction...

Due to be released later this autumn, *Descent* looks set to be one of the most frenetic shoot 'em ups scheduled for PlayStation release. The addition of multi-player link-up options and head-to-head play will undoubtedly make this one hell of an experience.

A runaway success on the PC, the PlayStation version of *Descent* should feature all the familiar addictive traits – and more besides.



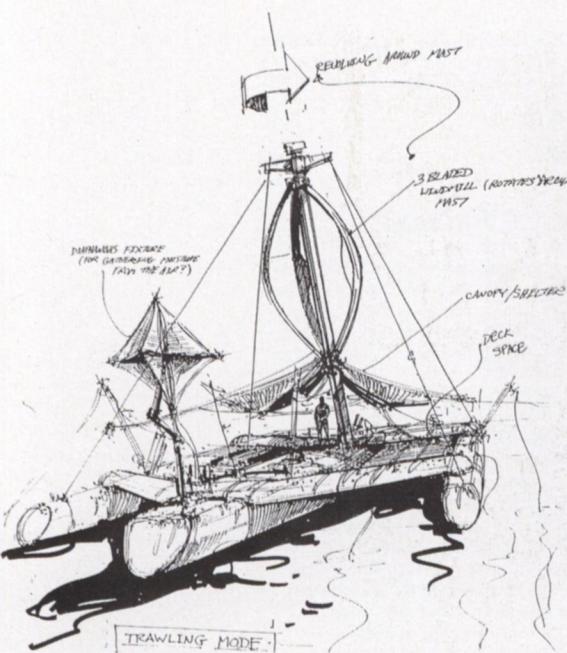
■ PUBLISHER: **Interplay**
■ RELEASE DATE: **November**
■ COMPLETE: **90%**
■ PRICE: **£40-£45**

Waterworld

The recent Kevin Costner futuristic *Mad Max*-on-water action movie *Waterworld* – which will go down in the annals of history for being one of the most expensive films ever made – is to be converted into an



■ 1 Gorgeous graphics and a close association with the film make *Waterworld* an interesting development.
■ 2 Decidedly un-watery shoot 'em up action.



Background graphics and craft design for the *Waterworld* game were researched thoroughly. Influences and specification details came from original sketches created for the film itself.

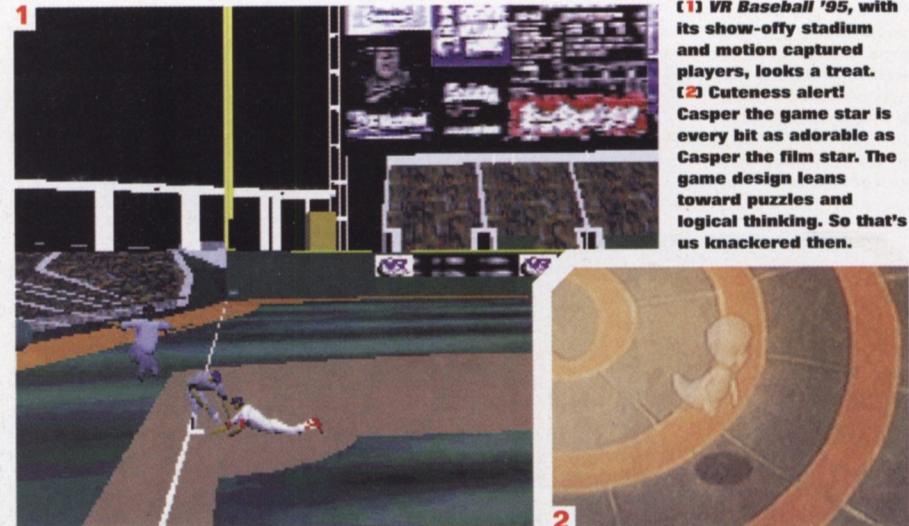
'action game, complete with full motion video sequences to complement the adventure. The story is as follows. The ice caps have melted and land is no more; people live on floating cities and piracy is rife. So as the hero, you don the cloak of the 'mariner', laden with your ultimate quest – to search for the earth's remaining patch of dry land, while swashbuckling your swash at anyone who crosses your path. Essentially this means that it's a jump-around-and-shoot-things affair.

Much attention has been given to the graphical side of *Waterworld*, which means that the game can boast fully rendered 3D graphics as well as 11 cinematic FMV sequences with which to set the plot. As you may gather from this imagery, countless influences also have been taken from the film – including set and craft designs – so fans will feel quite at home. Undoubtedly *Waterworld* will look the part, but the beleaguered history of film-turned-game is littered with casualties. However we await, with bated breath, until November.

■ PUBLISHER:	Interplay
■ RELEASE DATE:	November
■ COMPLETE:	70%
■ PRICE:	£40-£45

Casper

Another snapped-up licence, Interplay's *Casper* is based on the hit movie of the same name. The game design leans toward the action-cum-strategy genre, the focus being on puzzle-solving and exploration. Apparently



[1] VR Baseball '95, with its show-offy stadium and motion captured players, looks a treat. [2] Cuteness alert! Casper the game star is every bit as adorable as Casper the film star. The game design leans toward puzzles and logical thinking. So that's us knackered then.

'challenging yet cool', the gameplay sees you controlling Casper the friendly ghost as you search Whistaff Manor for various pieces of an ancient machine which has been dismantled and carelessly littered about the sprawling house.

Thwarting your exciting treasure hunt are Casper's three idiotic uncles who throw numerous obstacles into the equation, thus making up the puzzle-solving element of the game. To make life a little easier, though, Casper can fly, pass through walls, even travel through plug sockets, as well as being able to morph into a number of useful items in order to complete the challenges. Humour in plenty, this will no doubt border on the sickeningly cute, but apparently *Casper* isn't specifically aimed at a young audience.

■ PUBLISHER:	Interplay
■ RELEASE DATE:	November
■ COMPLETE:	50%
■ PRICE:	£40-£45

VR Baseball '95

Homing in on the growing interest in sports-related titles, Interplay has formed its own division, called VR Sports, to cater for this ever-expanding market. The first title to see a release under the new company branding will be *VR Baseball '95*, due out this November. Just how 'VR' it will be, however, remains to be seen.

The game design adopts an arcade feel but puts the player in what Interplay describes as 360° Virtual Fieldvision (or 'VF' for short), thus giving the player a unique perspective on the proceedings. *VR Baseball '95* is clever in more ways than one and also incorporates the wonders of motion capture

technology to generate realistic movement in the characters.

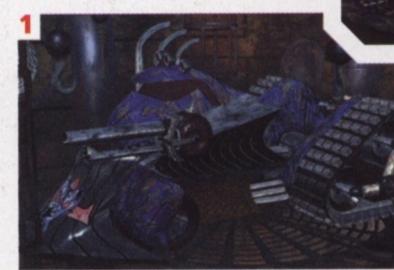
As for the intricacies of the game design itself – all the real NBL teams, players, logos and stats, as well as correct representations of the teams' official stadiums are featured, making for an authentic atmosphere. There are numerous gameplay options, ranging from Season and League play, using something called 'divisional alignment' (your guess is as good as ours). And for the anoraks among you, there's a management mode so that you can trade players.

■ PUBLISHER:	Interplay
■ RELEASE DATE:	November
■ COMPLETE:	50%
■ PRICE:	£40-£45

Rock 'n' Roll Racing 2

Initially a smash hit on the Super Nintendo back in '93, *Rock 'n' Roll Racing* was a light-hearted and pleasantly enjoyable lap-based racer fuelled by a rocky soundtrack featuring the likes of Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid'.

Completely tongue-in-cheek, the game screamed eccentricity. There were various alien drivers from which to choose, as well as a variety of wacky off-road style vehicles, and a mammoth arsenal of weapons



[1] Fancy taking this beast out to Sainsbury's on a Saturday? Queues? Pah! [2] Guns and dirty tactics galore in this manic and maniacal racer.

PrePlay | Interplay line-up

1 **Rock 'n' Roll Racing 2** boasts some amazing rendered vehicles – hopefully the courses will display a similar flair.
2 Now, this is just getting silly. I mean, think of the insurance costs. And where are the wing mirrors? How d'you park?



1 ranging from tacks to missiles for that true 'Get out of my face, road-hog!' and 'Where did you learn to drive – Mars?' feel. Now we get to see the sequel, only this time the game takes on a whole new perspective with the action being even more outrageous than before. Surely not.

Previously, *Rock 'n' Roll Racing* adopted an isometric perspective with flat background graphics and Micro Machine-sized cars. But the next-generation sequel welcomes the PlayStation with open arms and in so doing, boasts phenomenal 3D graphics, rendered backdrops and gob-smacking speed. You now view all the action from a third-person perspective situated behind your car, similar to *Ridge Racer*, while the tracks snake off into the distance.

There'll still be an abundance of crazy racing, lots of humour, oodles of weapons and a kicking rock track to drool over – ingredients which have the potential to make this quite an entertaining experience.

■ PUBLISHER: **Interplay**
■ RELEASE DATE: **November**
■ COMPLETE: **50%**
■ PRICE: **£40-£45**

Cyberia

1 **A**s is the case with the vast majority of new PlayStation titles due for release, *Cyberia* took its first breath as a glossy PC title which was released earlier this year to a less than complimentary welcoming committee.

Sadly the PC version fell decidedly short of the mark, hampered by a severe lack of gameplay despite the shining quality of the rendered graphics. It is hoped that the PlayStation adaptation will fair better.

Basically the game is a futuristic interactive movie with a theme revolving around the second of the



■ PUBLISHER: **Interplay**
■ RELEASE DATE: **January '96**
■ COMPLETE: **70%**
■ PRICE: **£40-£45**

Lost Vikings 2

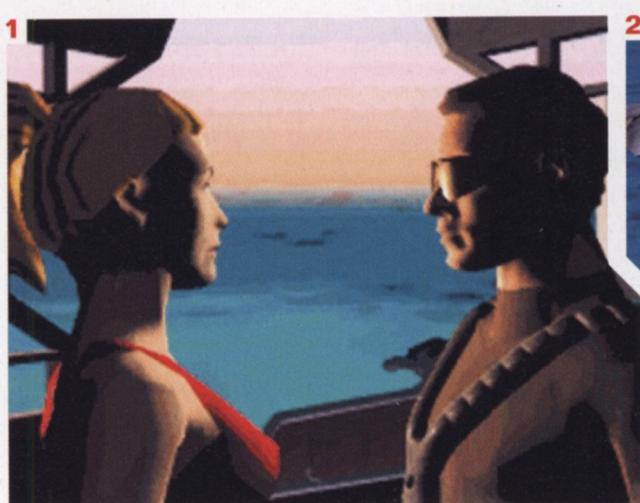
Another 16-bit title due to turn 'next generation' is *Lost Vikings 2*, a quirky Nordic platform game. Controlling a roguish trio of Vikings, you venture up and over a plethora of precarious looking platforms, clamber up numerous ladders, solve umpteen cunning puzzles, and dispose of the occasional bad guy – all in a fixed effort to reach the end of the level. There are some 30 levels in all, spanning five graphically distinctive worlds – and with each one proving more devious than the last, you'll certainly have your work cut out.

This all sounds pretty straightforward, but the gameplay is drastically accentuated by the necessity to chop and change control between the trio to make use of their individual talents – it's a bit like *Lemmings* only on a much smaller scale. For example, one Viking can be used to jump over a gap to reach a switch which activates a lift; another can be an archer who shoots a target, thus opening a locked door. It's all brain-training stuff.

Quirky and attractive in its execution, *Lost Vikings 2* is one of those games which, once you've beaten the initial levels, will no doubt ensnare you in its unforgiving grasp for life. Well, for a good few days at any rate.



■ PUBLISHER: **Interplay**
■ RELEASE DATE: **January '96**
■ COMPLETE: **40%**
■ PRICE: **£40-£45**

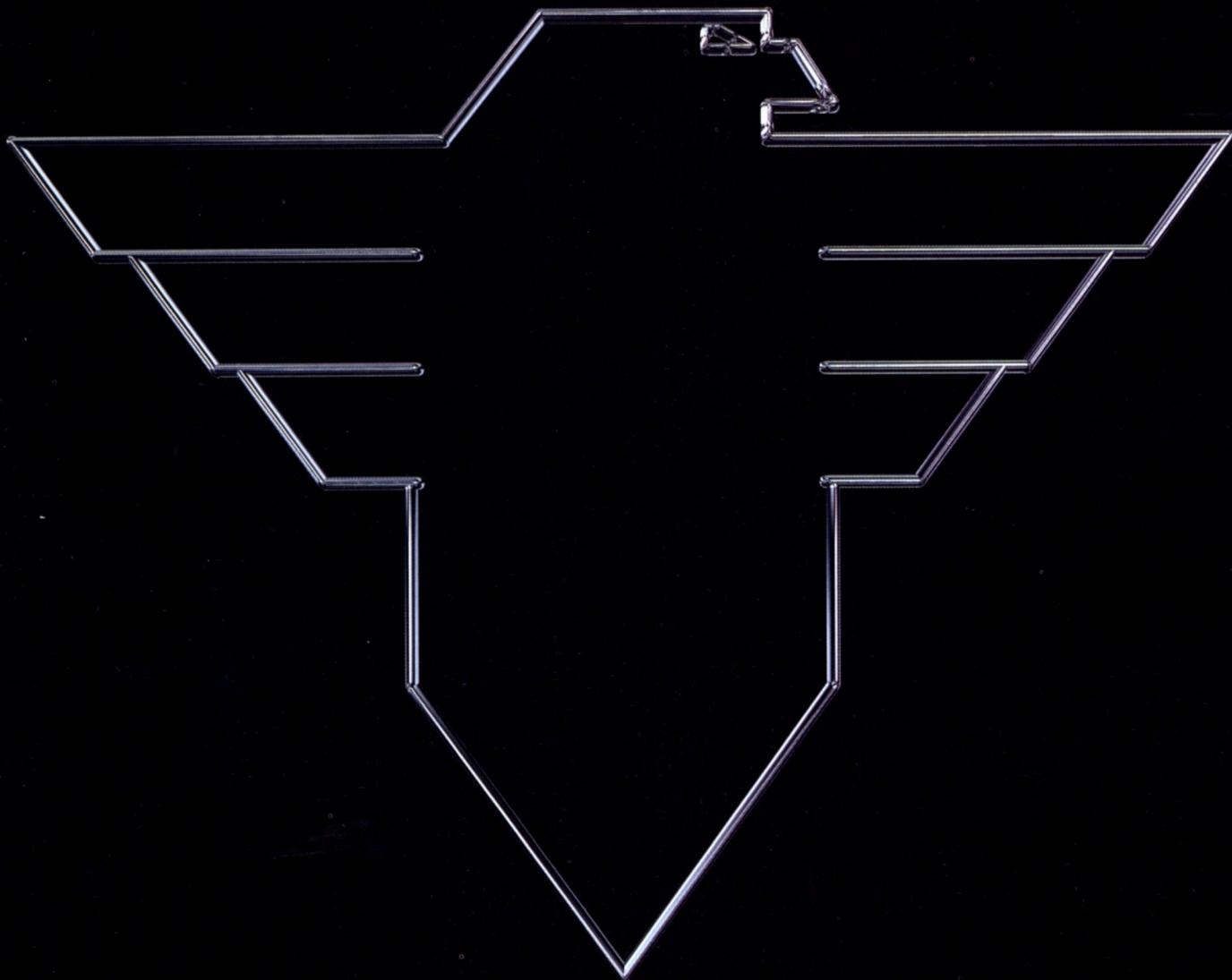


2



1 **Cyberia's** full-on cyber-sex action, seen here in full rendered glory. Well maybe not 'full-on' – a quick snog's about the extent of it.
2 You get to fly this beastie across some very impressive pre-rendered landscapes in *Cyberia*.

F I R E S T O R M
T H U N D E R H A W K 2



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Delphine's *Fade To Black*

With **movie-style** camera angles, action and emotion,

Delphine's 3D sequel is breaking new ground.

PSM has a **heart to Hart** with its creator



Conrad Hart evades his pursuers by folding down his spaceship's wings and jumping into the blue swirliness of hyperspace.

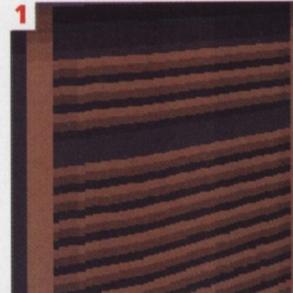
Smack in another clip, and shuffle breathlessly along the wall. Now dash around the corner and let off a couple of well-placed shots. That should take care of the first guard. The second guard's seen you, but his first round crackles off your energy shield. Quickly now, crouch down, spin round and take him out with a grenade. Messy, but strangely satisfying.

This is the world of *Fade To Black* – a world as eye-poppingly real and heart-stoppingly action-packed as ever you'll see. For our hero Conrad Hart, it's a hostile world – full of evil universe-ruling alien beings for him to outwit and destroy. For you, it's an amazing world, crammed with outstanding graphics, corking gameplay and fearsome puzzles. And it's coming to your PlayStation very, very soon.

Okay – here's why you should care. Firstly, you've never seen anything quite like it. *Fade To Black's* blend of realtime 3D action with cinematic sequences, first-person-perspective shooting and puzzles galore is utterly unique. Amazement is guaranteed. Secondly, it has been created by Delphine Software, the trail-blazing development team responsible for the all-time classic titles *Flashback* and *Another World*. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it's absolutely marvellous. We've played an early version and – believe us – this is going to be a very big game indeed.

In fact, we liked it so much that we just had to chat with **Paul Cuisset**, the game's creator, director and designer. What is it about Delphine, we wondered, that makes its games so special?

'We're simply trying to put into our games what we



as gamers would like to find in a game', remarks Cuisset. 'We're trying to push technological limits, researching new technologies like Silicon Graphics machines or motion capture. But priority is given to complete interactivity and to making the games as playable as possible.'

Which is entirely sensible, of course: for despite the many pre-rendered animations that cut in between scenes, or display certain actions from a more dramatic point of view, *Fade To Black* is primarily an action-orientated adventure game with all the shooting, running and jumping even the most thrill-starved gamer could wish for.

But it's also a cinematic experience, with plot, action, dialogue and music working together to stir an emotional response, as the director is at pains to point out. '*Fade To Black* is an absorbing adventure game with lots of action and emotion,' he

[1] Hero Hart tops up on energy in this futuristic hamster exercise ball. **[2]** Operational control panels are clearly marked with chevrons for the hard-of-thinking. **[3]** Yikes! What's that thing looming out of the dark? Oh no! It's a *Star Wars* reject. **[4]** Poor old Conrad makes a hasty retreat towards the laundrette after his initial surprise. **[5]** After careful consideration, Conrad's dedication to duty outweighs his personal hygiene problems, and instead he blows the sucker away.

■ PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts	■ DEVELOPER:	Delphine Software	■ START DATE:	January '95
■ RELEASE DATE:	Spring '96	■ ORIGIN:	France	■ COMPLETE:	50%
■ PRICE:	TBA	■ STYLE:	3D arcade adventure	■ PLAYERS:	One



enthuses, 'and the mix seems to work well. In other words, while you're playing it, you shouldn't feel that the game is purely a demonstration of technology – I wanted to avoid that at all costs. Some characters you'll love, like Sarah, some you'll hate. And you'll be eager to help people so that they'll return the favour at a later stage. You're free to kill who you like, even your friends, but you'll have to be discerning if you want to get anywhere – just like in real life.'

Sarah, by the way, is one of several companions you'll encounter in your travels. But she's probably the most important, since her fate affects the development of your game dramatically. 'There are 12 or 13 levels', Cuisset continues. 'Twelve if you keep Sarah alive and one more – quite a difficult one – if she's killed.' The creation of an entire level that some players won't ever see is typical of the Delphine team's drive to produce a game that is as flexible and engrossing as possible. Such dedication is

a rare thing these days.

But Cuisset and his colleagues relish a challenge. After all, the graphical techniques they've chosen to develop for *Fade To Black* are nothing short of revolutionary. To make Conrad's animation as convincing as possible, for example, they've created a new system to capture the movement of an actor in 3D, using four infra-red cameras and super-reflective sensors.

Added to this are swirling in-game viewpoints and the refinement of a virtual camera system to make the characters appear even more solidly realistic. 'Realtime 3D has never been used this way before', Cuisset boasts, 'so we had a lot of technical problems – such as the placement of our virtual cameras. But overcoming these hitches certainly proved interesting – it was like an adventure in itself.'

And these kinds of obstacles must have been complicated by a cross-platform release – the PC version of *Fade To Black* is now finished, a month ahead of the PlayStation game. How do the two versions compare? 'They're basically the same game,' says

Cuisset, 'but there are some differences on the graphics side. We've exploited the very nice Gouraud shading offered by the PlayStation hardware and, of course, the 64,000 colours instead of the 256 we had on the PC. But while the PC offered three different resolutions depending on the machine's capabilities, on the PlayStation the resolution will be a standard 320x200. That's enough, though, considering that when you play on a console you're a few metres from your TV set, which isn't the case when you play on a PC.'

And what of the future? Delphine is already working on a sequel to *Fade To Black*. What can we possibly hope to expect? For once, Cuisset is somewhat coy. 'I hope that my next game will be as much an innovative step forward as *Fade To Black* is to *Flashback*. Let's discuss this in a year's time.' And rest assured, we will.

***Fade To Black's* blend of realtime 3D action**

Delphine's with cinematic sequences, first-person-perspective shooting and puzzles galore is utterly unique



The Delphine *Fade To Black* team. In full.



[1]-[6] This sequence follows your ship *inside* the Octopus power reactor on planet Red Eye. Once inside you have to blast away at the revolving energy crystal assembly (or something) and then watch as it blows up. Mission complete? Ah, that would be telling...



cut like a knife

Namco's Stunning coin-op makes the transition from LaserDisc to compact disc, but is it more video than game?

The year is 1991 and a new coin-op graces the local den of iniquity. Mouths drop, saliva dribbles, and knuckles drag. For the game being unveiled is none other than *Starblade* – Namco's seminal sci-fi shooter.

Utilising Namco's proprietary System 21 arcade board and a LaserDisc playback system (the sort of thing you can buy to watch movies) *Starblade* manages to mix movie-

quality computer graphics with realtime polygon enemies. While the stunning space scenery hurtles past, you can interactively target the enemy craft and vapourise the vermin.

Quantum leap. It's 1995 and the *Starblade* coin-op has been relegated to dingy seaside arcades. But the name and game lives on: the movie footage has been squeezed on to CD, and once more Sony's PlayStation has the power to realise those glorious polygon spaceships. *Starblade* is reborn as *Starblade α*.

In actuality, PlayStation has power to spare; so not only can it draw the plain freighters and fighters of the original, but they've also been given a coat of texture-mapped paint. At the start of the mission you can select to play either the original plain-polygon version or the 'alpha' version with the ships in their spanking new livery.

The in-game action borrows inspiration from a variety of sources – most notably the three *Star Wars* movies and *The Last Starfighter*. The giant mechanical planet, Red Eye (a dead ringer for the Death Star), is en route to jolly old earth: your task is to intercept it, fly your Geosword fighter into the central core and blow up the Octopus generator – so named because it's got eight sticky-up bits. Along the way you're taken on an interstellar roller-coaster ride past



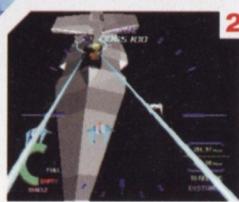
[1] Ol' Red Eye is back: a moon-sized alien construction of dangerous intent. [2] And this is the thing you have to blow up.

huge battle cruisers, through an asteroid field and across the arid, blasted surface of Red Eye itself. And since you're effectively the gunner of the team, all you have to do is sit tight and fire lots.

Starblade α is a real treat for that part of the brain that handles visual images, and increases its pleasure-giving in direct proportion to the size of TV you're playing on. You can also play with the PlayStation mouse to make it all the more entertaining. The one dark cloud hovering over Namco's parade is that as a coin-op conversion, it may be high on novelty and low on longevity. We shall see when, in the next issue, we review the exhaust off it.



These shots illustrate the lovely texture-mapped scenery afforded players of *Starblade α*. The video footage is generally sharp and glitch-free.



[1] The 'alpha' bit of the title refers to the new texture-mapped video – a far cry from the plain-polygon original [2].

■ PUBLISHER:

SCE/Namco

■ DEVELOPER:

■ RELEASE DATE:

November 24

■ ORIGIN:

■ PRICE:

£39.99

■ STYLE:

Arcade shoot 'em up

Namco

■ START DATE:

Summer '94

Japan

■ COMPLETE:

100%

■ PLAYERS:

One

guess who's coming to DINNER

Fresh from Acclaim's Japanese office
is this full-motion video adventure of things that go bump in the night

Coded by the Warp team in Tokyo, *D* – we kid you not – is a video graphic adventure in the vein of Virgin's *The 7th Guest* or *Myst*. Only simpler and less obscure. Reams and reams of video footage are dragged off CD, portraying the actions of the on-screen heroine – a lithesome slip of a girl who, for a pre-rendered polygon model, is a bit of a babe.

The 'D' of the title is a Japanese reference to Dracula, and so you know from the outset that the creepy gothic building isn't just a disused Disney set. Chances are, you're going to end up as an unwitting blood donor by the end of the evening.

The unusual thing about codeshop Warp is that it renders all its sequences on high-end Amigas in *Lightwave 3D* (the program used to create the effects in *Babylon 5*) — there's not a PC or Silicon Graphics machine in sight.

The closest thing to an interactive movie you can currently get, *D* displays footage of the heroine walking up stairs, opening doors, looking into the mirror, getting

1



horribly skewered on spikes and so on. Depending on which way you push the joypad, a new sequence plays: so when you reach the top of the stairs and push left, she walks into the bathroom. That sort of thing.

Whenever you happen upon a clue-containing device, the action automatically changes to an



interactive phase, giving you direct control of an on-screen cursor with which to click on and collect things. Okay, it's not *that* interactive, but it at least provides an interface for clue-collecting and puzzle-solving. Later levels also incorporate *Dragon's Lair*-style action, where you have to quickly hit the joystick to initiate the relevant harm-evasive manoeuvre.

The three-CD PlayStation pack is due in a few month's time, and boasts some of the scariest music of all time – so crank up the volume and ready yourself for imminent lower-stomach evacuation.



- 【1】 Worse than meeting Dracula, our babe gets horribly embroiled in a *Crystal Maze* puzzle.
- 【2】 One of the many objects in the girl's inventory is a compact, but the mirror cracks if she opens it. Odd - we reckon she doesn't look that bad.

A close-up view of a stained glass window. The design is composed of various colored glass pieces (yellow, pink, white) set in a lead frame. A central, dark, indistinct figure is positioned against a background of white and yellow glass. The overall pattern is geometric and abstract.

[Top to bottom] Our heroine happens upon a glowing, scuttling scarab which throws her into a hallucinatory trance, part dream, part forgotten memory...

■ PUBLISHER:	Acclaim	■ DEVELOPER:	Warp	■ START DATE:	January '94
■ RELEASE DATE:	February '96	■ ORIGIN:	Japan	■ COMPLETE:	75%
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	Graphic adventure	■ PLAYERS:	One

Wipeout

Sony's futuristic 3D racing simulation
is sleek and graphically stunning.

But how enticing will the **gameplay** be?



Level one

Track name: Altima VII
Setting: Canada
Circuit length: 5.5km
Surface: R3600 Racing Standard

A reasonably gentle introduction to the world of *Wipeout*, although the initial process of learning to control the craft takes some time. Altima is fairly straight and doesn't require any airbrake squeezing. A pretty good course when using the link mode.



Level two



Track name: Karbonis V
Setting: Japan
Circuit length: 3.3km
Surface: Reclaimed titanium

Like a trip through the Lake District. In a spaceship. Yes, this is a most handsome circuit - probably the prettiest of the lot. Again it's fairly easy to negotiate after some practice. Flat, and with few sharp bends, most pilots will have little trouble here.

Careening along the first circuit in *Wipeout*, the novice engages the ship's airbrakes with liberal abandon. His nose doesn't bleed, nor do his cheeks flap, and he finishes eighth out of eight with monotonous regularity. His disturbing penchant for bouncing repeatedly from one side of the track to the other affords much merriment from members of the team.

Your own correspondent's early *Wipeout* career was admittedly not blessed with distinction. No matter, for in the ensuing weeks it was all to change. 'Lay off the darned shoulder buttons, young fellow! You don't need the brakes on the first few tracks', offered a voice. The gamer gleefully took the advice and the show was on the road. Or bobbing on air, a few feet above, in this case.

Visually resplendent, slick, velvety smooth, addictive. It might sound like a description of Guinness but equally it applies to *Wipeout*, a futuristic 3D racing game with detailed, beautifully rendered craft and six stunning, undulating tracks to glide. The initial impression of *Wipeout*, however, was of a somewhat dull affair dressed to kill, of a game which promised much, yet in

One couldn't ask for a slicker, more visually stimulating entrance into the world of PlayStation games

terms of excitement delivered little. And in a way it remains a valid if rather finicky observation, for *Wipeout* is wonderfully sleek but lacking in, for example, *Ridge Racer*'s in-yer-face immediacy.

Only when you master control of the craft (or at least gain a semblance of authority) and develop the confidence and anticipation required to win races, does *Wipeout* begin to shine. The first time you bustle up to second spot - awaiting the chance to unload on to the race leader that





■ PUBLISHER:

Sony Computer Ent.

■ DEVELOPER: Sony Interactive Studios

■ RELEASE DATE:

Out now

■ ORIGIN:

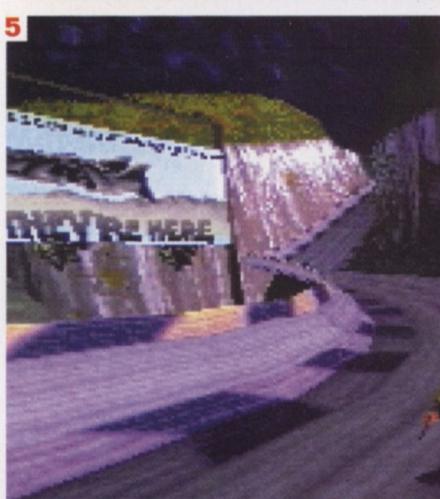
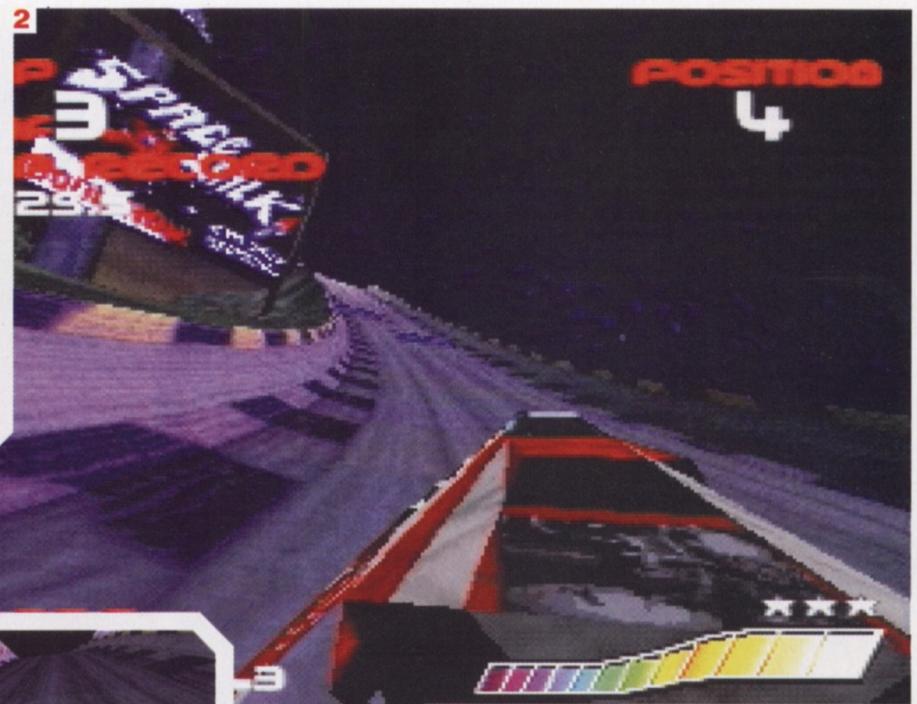
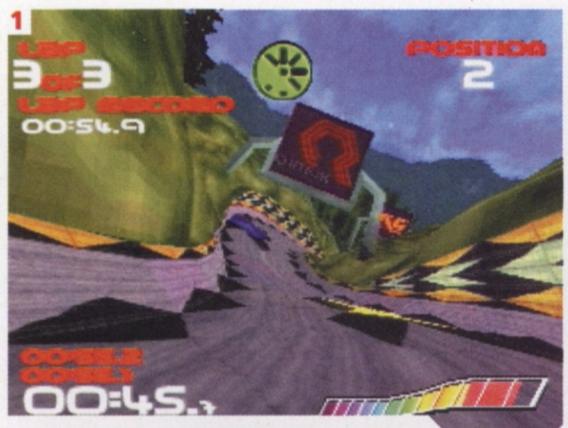
UK

■ PRICE:

£44.99

■ STYLE:

Racing simulation



1) Green icon alert. Unload those mines. Now. 2) Advertising creeps into computer game shocker. Pilots are reading them and not concentrating. 3) Whoaaah there. What did we just say? 4) Will there be a huge drop-off over the hill? A tight bend even? 5) Far better to get a panoramic view. 6) Guaranteed, the ship in front will have a shield if you have a missile. Negotiate the tunnel 7), swoop through the bridge 8) and, corks, phallic missile icon alert 9). Offload now.

PlayTest

1 The attention to visual detail throughout *Wipeout* rarely fails to draw a gasp. But judge for yourself. Sure, the screen shots might not do the game justice but you should buy it anyway. 2 After each battle the race is replayed using various camera angles. A screen shot of one, we proudly offer. 3 Not travelling at great pace. How can you tell? Check out the bar, bottom right. 4 The most spectacular scene in the whole of the game. The pilot swoops across the bridge, before diving over a sheer drop-off. 5 Your shield is on.

3 1:14.0



missile power-up you've been saving, before sweeping past the flailing boulder to victory – truly is a moment to savour.

Four craft from which to choose, and though they differ visually, they aren't terribly discernible in terms of control. But clearly the programmers have spent a great deal of time and effort on the ship's control mechanics. Certainly the longer you play, the more enjoyable *Wipeout* becomes – simply because learning to fly the old crate to any degree of competence is a game in itself. Nudge the pad and your craft oscillates accordingly. And because you can move up and down as well as from side to side, the rider can gain momentum by sweeping into the curves, taking them at the right height and line. Most living-room pilots lean into the bend, physically imploring the ship to successfully negotiate that tricky corner.

The shoulder buttons house twin airbrakes and though these are best used sparsely, as the courses become more demanding, with tighter bends, it's impossible to hurtle the corners without giving them the odd squeeze. Hit the side

of the track and you lose a lot of ground – not a major problem early on, but the later circuits require incredible concentration and virtually fault-free laps to ensure victory.

The realistic sensation of speed in *Wipeout* is immensely invigorating. **In fact, the feeling isn't dissimilar to the immersive motion rides you find at theme parks, particularly when you travel in first-person perspective** (as opposed to the alternative, viewed-from-behind-the-ship mode). Opinion is divided as to which offers the more comfortable passage: 'first-person' is mainly intuitive, whereas using the 'from-behind' option, you get that fraction of a second longer to anticipate your next manoeuvre. Each to his own, really.

Brief pause for an InfoPara™. *Wipeout* has three race options – the championship race, a single-circuit race and the time trial. In championship mode, you start on the easiest track and in order to qualify, a top-three placing is required. Five more courses follow, and if successful, you move on to the Rapier class – same courses, only set in the



Level three

Track name: Terramax
Setting: Germany
Circuit length: 4.1km
Surface: F3600 Racing standard

Visually, Terramax is probably the most spectacular circuit with two course cut-outs featuring huge drops. At one point, the pilot snakes through a bridge over water before shooting over a huge drop off. A fine track.



Level four



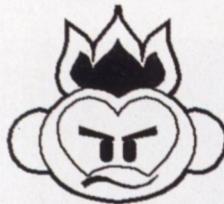
Track name: Korodera
Setting: Russia
Circuit length: 5.4km
Surface: Carbonic iron

Korodera is a bleak, almost post-nuclear industrial landscape with huge brick buildings, bare trees and Orwellian chimneys. The going is noticeably tougher than previous levels with tight bends demanding far more concentration from the pilot. A challenge.

Level five

Track name: Arridos IV
Setting: USA
Circuit length: 6.04km
Surface: Blasted sandstone

A tight circuit through mid-west mining country. The pilot sweeps through canyons, over huge drop-offs and snakes through dark mineshaft tunnels. At one point a ridged section ensures the ship bounces up and down. Narrow, twisting and difficult to master.



dark hours and significantly faster. All six tracks are themed, from desert to forest, city to snowscape, and they look breathtaking – particularly the drop-off, cut-out sections of the course which require the racer to shoot over a canyon and reach the other side of the track. Mistime the manoeuvre and you suffer the indignation of being towed back to the course by an airborne recovery vehicle.

The courses are littered with a variety of power-ups, including weaponry, protective shields, speed arrows, and a startlingly frenzied warp, which usually propels your ship straight into the nearest wall. Unleashing a missile is a right laugh, and no mistake, but far more important are the speed arrows which offer that extra pace required to catch the leading pack. Despite the finery, though, *Wipeout* remains very much a traditional racing game; the winner collects his 10 points and heads for the next circuit, and you would always rather come first than spend time tracking other ships and smacking them with a laser-guided missile, right?

And yet... there is something amiss in *Wipeout*. Sure, the physics of the thing are remarkable. One couldn't ask for a slicker, more visually stimulating entrance into the world of PlayStation games. Spectacular, occasionally gut-

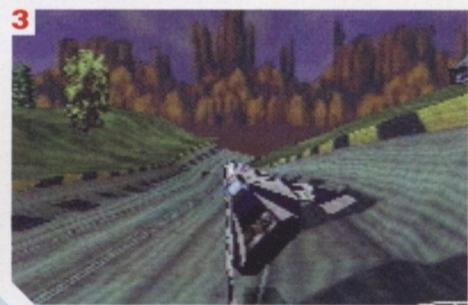
wrenching, and enormous fun to fly but – and it may seem odd after the lyrical waxing – *Wipeout* lacks passion. The sort of passion that makes you lean forward in anticipation every time the countdown in *Ridge Racer* begins. The sort of passion that makes you punch the air when you score that vital goal in *Sensible Soccer*. Heck, it isn't a case of 'great production values – where's the game?' because *Wipeout* will keep you in the cockpit for quite a while.

Only SIS have backed the game with ambient dance music, using tracks from bands such as Leftfield and Orbital – surely with admirable intent, but it gives the game such a relaxed aura, that often you feel you're just going through the motions. Why not hit the gamer with some speech samples when you blast someone with a missile or when you misjudge a drop-off? Anything to stir you from the hypnotic beat, to add a touch more urgency, a little more intensity to the proceedings. A two-player link mode via cable undoubtedly adds to the life of the game – an option which requires more judicious use of the power-ups.

Although *Wipeout* lacks the seat-of-the-pants excitement of *Ridge Racer*, it remains a fine game and one which perfectly illustrates the power of the PlayStation. You really should have it.

Track name: Silverstream
Setting: Greenland
Circuit length: 6.4km
Surface: Artificial crystal

By far the trickiest course, as one would expect. Silverstream is a beautiful course with snow-covered trees and stalactites – mites go up and tites come down. Loads of really tight, often 90° turns and a splendid hoarding which reads, 'Caution: Yetis Crossing'. A victory.



1 The sixth level is a sort of slippy-slidey ice world, only you don't slippy or slidey 'cos you're floating. 2 C'mon, just look at that.

The finest screenshot ever to grace a magazine, you will, no doubt, agree.

3 Not the finest. 4 Nudge the airbrake, straighten up, check the rear-view mirror. Not! 5 Awesome drop-off scene.



wrenching, and enormous fun to fly but – and it may seem odd after the lyrical waxing – *Wipeout* lacks passion. The sort of passion that makes you lean forward in anticipation every time the countdown in *Ridge Racer* begins. The sort of passion that makes you punch the air when you score that vital goal in *Sensible Soccer*. Heck, it isn't a case of 'great production values – where's the game?' because *Wipeout* will keep you in the cockpit for quite a while.

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'Peering over a ledge, about a thousand feet in the air, is an awesome feeling...'. Jumping Flash gives PSM's reviewer a case of vertigo. Page 78.



VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Quite astonishing 9	■ GAMEPLAY:	Terrific to fly 8	A gravity-defying, stomach-churning futuristic racing game. A little more in-yer-face passion would have been welcome, but it's still enormous fun.
■ SOUND:	Ambient dance beat 8	■ PRESENTATION:	Smarter than Armani 8	
■ LIFESPAN:	The pilot returns 8	■ ORIGINALITY:	A futuristic Formula One 6	

Battle Arena

Toshinden



Long a **staple diet** for pad bashers,
the **beat 'em up** is entering a **new dimension**.

But can the gameplay match the **visual progression?**



Once in a blue chip, a game comes along which so visually blasts the rest out of the water, that one wonders quite how the stride was made in such a short space of time. *Battle Arena Toshinden* snugly fits into this elite category and the leap in ocular elegance is firmly down to the PlayStation. But let us not wax lyrical about how many polygons per second this mighty machine can shift. Rather, let us content ourselves in the knowledge that Sony's games hardware debut is by far the best console the shelf can carry.

Toshinden, then. A beat 'em up, you will gather, taking a

① Fireballs and missiles play a strong role in *Toshinden* – especially if your opponent ain't got 'em. **②** Boss-bloke Gaia shows off his enormous Zippo to a surprised Sho. **③** Red Eiji gives blue Eiji a taste of his metal.

sideways glance at one of the screenshots. Actually, before we continue toward full steam let us first nail a myth, perhaps to a tree in Warwick or somewhere: the myth that the beat 'em up is simply a button-bashing festival of gore for those with an IQ of 12. Friends, dispel this misguided notion. We are talking about possibly the ultimate one-on-one game genre here, a fight to the death, a march to glory, a meeting of minds, of bodies... ('Nurse... NURSE!').

And be in no doubt, the beat 'em up will flourish on the PlayStation. Already a surfeit of contenders queue ringside,

**Toshinden... is first into the ring and
a handsome contender at that, gloriously
bedecked in Gouraud-shaded polygons**

Foursight: *Toshinden's* oh-so-useful viewpoints revealed



① Normal. This is your standard view of the proceedings. **②** Long. This provides quite a dramatic, expressionist perspective on things. **③** Overhead. Oddly enough, the roving camera is suspended above the heads of the combatants. **④** Sky. Aka 'stupid'. Anyone attempting to play from this view is seriously dim.



■ PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Ent. ■ DEVELOPER: Takara
■ RELEASE DATE: Out now ■ ORIGIN: Japan
■ PRICE: £44.99 ■ STYLE: Beat 'em up



1) Always keen on a big entrance, Gaia flies into combat on wires. 2) Sho, one of the secret characters, gives Eiji a right hoofing. 3) Ellis (green hair) and Mondo (big pole) mix it up. 4) God only knows what's going on here. It would appear that Gaia, ever the trickster, has set fire to... something. Causing an enormous explosion.



ready to take on all-comers, be they two-dimensional or of a polygonal nature.

Toshinden, though, is first into the ring and a handsome contender at that, gloriously bedecked in Couraud-shaded polygons (or you could say, 'It looks bloody grand'). Truly, it is the first fully-fledged 3D beat 'em up. The protagonists can roll and skip around one another, whereas previous examples of the genre have limited the characters to hopping over one another (although in one particularly sad affair, the poor pugilists could not even perform this standard manoeuvre).

The ability to circle opponents certainly adds a greater tactical element to the bouts, but if you're fighting a pal who insists on floating like a butterfly, while showing a marked reluctance to sting like a bee, the show can go on for a little too long and become a mite tedious.

The visual attention to detail is nigh on astounding. Waif-like circus dancer Ellis may have rather traveller-esque green locks but her white, see-through pantaloons are a graphic feast. Indeed, all eight thumpsters are blessed with a positively dashing sartorial splendour.

But as we know, fancy garb doth not a beat 'em up make. Again, points head for the scoreboard when the observer examines the superbly-realised, enormous, solid 3D backgrounds: but then some depart when you realise how such intricate detail slows down the action itself. Shame, because the backdrops really are stunning - from the flowing rivers to Stonehenge and the weird towers which ➤



Ellis



Ellis, a former circus dancer, wields a vicious dirk (small dagger). Among her specialities is this sliding attack (1), where she zooms along the floor before flying upwards, slitting her assailant up through the ribcage in the process. She's also adept at a number of flying attacks, including a mid-air somersault drop-kick thing (2). Very impressive.

Kayin



Kayin Amoh, the offspring of an ungodly Scottish/Japanese alliance, is armed with the ancient claymore and is well-versed in martial arts. Here he performs his nifty leg-drop manoeuvre (1). Don't try this at home, kids. Kayin also has a vicious special attack called 'Deadly Ray' (2). Sadly, this is a picture of him swinging his sword ineffectually at Duke.

Mondo



Mondo is a spear-brandishing Oriental with attitude. One of his nastiest moves is the skewering of his opponent and then waving them around like a flag (1). Painful and humiliating. Mondo's mystical eastern magic comes into play when he performs his propeller-style spinning spear trick. Thus (2).

Run-Go



A mace-waving yank, Run-Go Iron makes up in brute force what he lacks in panache. Like here, when he simply lunges crudely at his opponent (1). One of Run-Go Iron's special moves is his mace-slam, which crushes the recipient and then toasts the victim with a fireball (2).

PlayTest



→ rather resemble sky-scraper versions of Windy Miller's pad, though without the sails.

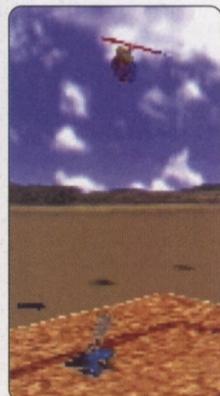
So, *Toshinden*. A visual banquet. Agreed. But what of the game itself? In the tradition of the beat 'em up, each fighter is blessed with singular characteristics. **All have weapons – be they knives, whips or swords – and the game employs projectiles in the special manoeuvres.** Fair play, we say. There are (for those with a notebook handy) eight fighters from which to choose, plus two extra extra cheaty boss-type fellows. Not a vast array, you'll agree, and likely to be significantly outnumbered when the other gangs turn up. Both the four main buttons and those situated on the shoulder are utilised during bouts. You can run, throw, kick, block and punch, as well as pull off a few special moves.

The battles themselves often take on a rather surreal air, with the powerful polygon pugilists leaping miles skyward before returning to the fray. It all seems rather slow, and occasionally the action lacks fluidity. It certainly isn't the most intuitive beat 'em up ever and genre doyens may find *Toshinden* somewhat limiting, simply because there is a relative dearth of moves.

This isn't to say that *Toshinden* is a bad game – far from it. Only behind the glorious visuals lies decent if unspectacular fare. Opinion varies when colleagues are questioned as to their fighting favourite. Some are content to remain in the comforting corner that is *Street Fighter*, others swear by *Mortal Kombat*. And, of course, there are many more contenders ever willing to climb into the ring.

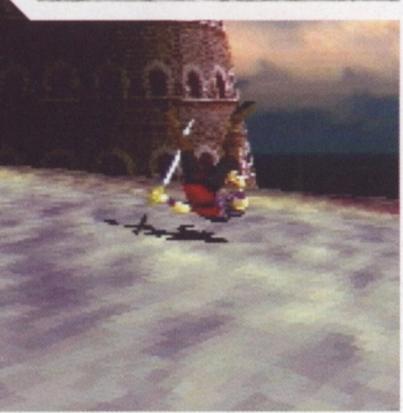
But for now, anyone itching for immediate action should enjoy *Toshinden*; despite the odd misgiving it's an attractive and playable basher. It's also extremely well suited to people who have never before played a beat 'em up in their lives – *Toshinden* isn't quite as merciless or complex as some of the more frenzied fist-fests.

And if a more handsome looker enters the arena before Christmas, your correspondent shall flaming fireballs across the office send. And knives. Not that you can have flaming knives... Or can you?



1 Blimey! Now that's what you call a fireball. Poor old Duke gets his chestnuts roasted by Gaia.

2 One of the characters (could be Sho) goes all sparkly, while the other simply falls over. This happens a lot in *Toshinden*.



VERDICT

- GRAPHICS: **Made in heaven 9**
- SOUND: **A tad bland 5**
- LIFESPAN: **Best with two 6**

- GAMEPLAY: **Slap 'n' tickle 8**
- PRESENTATION: **No intro, few options 6**
- ORIGINALITY: **It's a beat 'em up 5**

Duke



Full name: Duke B Rambert. **Full nationality:** French. **Full weaponry:** bloody big sword. **Duke's big move is his 'Going Berserk' [D], where he thrashes around in a festival of clanging and magic. And he's got a big sword too [F].**

Eiji



Eiji Shinjo is a Japanese warrior with a ceremonial *nihontoh* blade. His sword emits fireballs – an unrealistic but particularly useful device [D]. Eiji can also kick people in the head, although his killer move is a flaming shoulder charge, followed by a spinning leap [F].

Fo



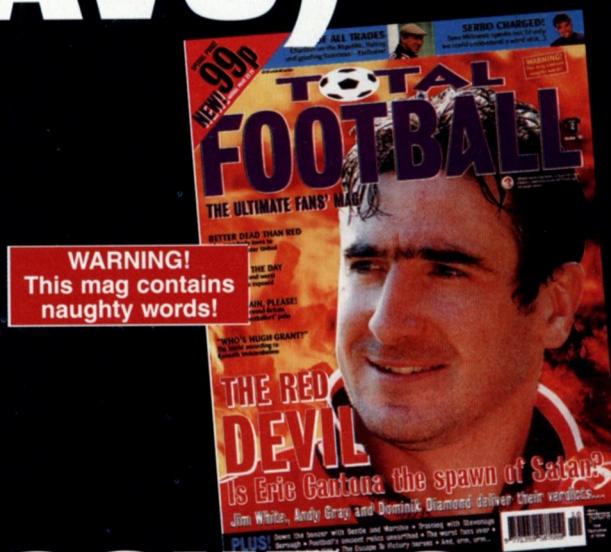
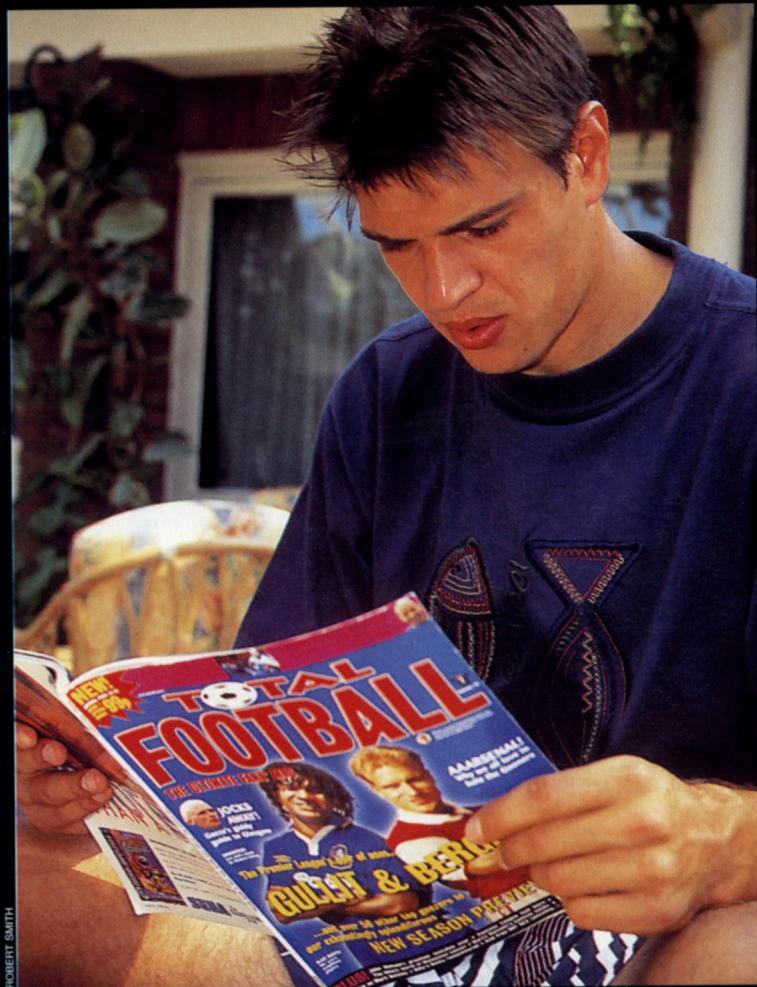
Fo Fai is a wizened Chinese wizard, with a mastery of magic – and long iron claws. This rolling ball of blue stuff [D] is a prime motivator in the 'getting out of Fo's way' move. For an old geezer, Fo is also a bit keen with the claws, picking up hefty Run-Go and tossing him backwards [F].

Sofia



Ex-KGB agent Sofia is the dominatrix of the game. Here Eiji has paid her to give him a slapping, the pervert [D]. Although Sofia is a bit handy with a whip and can unleash the odd fireball [F], she doesn't really have any killer moves.

TOTAL FOOTBALL: AS READ BY ALL DISCERNING SERBIAN ASTON VILLA STRIKERS (CALLED SAVO)



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Do you hold truck with such finery? Funny eh? Eh? Eh...



You can peruse the pits and check out the game characters' cars and trucks. The camera cranes around the vehicles while you gaze in awe at the artwork. It's awfully clever, wonderfully slick, though ultimately a pointless exercise. Behold the Passion Wagon's number.

Destruction Derby



Is this the **innovative**, original, demolish-some **bash 'em about** racer many have led us to believe; or merely a **pretender** struggling to find **top gear**?



Wow, what a race!, enthuses the commentator for the umpteenth time, as you spin wildly at the crossroads after colliding with a whole bunch of cars. Unfortunately *Destruction Derby*'s very own Murray Walker is, more often than not, way off the mark. Half the time, the driver who suffers a severe battering is in no position to finish the race, for as you take a knock, so your stock car deteriorates. And when you get reeled at the crossroads on the figure-of-eight circuits (often 720° and then some), there is no clear indication of which direction you're supposed to take. Not an arrow, nor even a voice bellowing 'Wrong way!'. Anything would have sufficed, really. Supposedly, the camera swings to point you in the right path but it pans around wildly only further confusing the issue.

The driver is often reduced to taking a wild guess and usually heads the wrong way, seeing his race position drop from, say, third to eighteenth in the space of seconds. Worst of all, once the front end of the car has been severely hammered, the steering goes completely doolally. You are now

at the mercy of the pack, still with over half the race to complete. The car dies, your race is over, you start again. Gnarr and hurrrumph.

And yet... and yet... despite this somewhat depressing scenario, *Destruction Derby* isn't quite as bad as the portrait painted thus far. Heck, you can have a lot of fun with this game – we have. But let us gripe a little more first.

Initial impressions of the game were centred mainly on the struggle to control the car. Compare the fabulously precise control of *Ridge Racer* to *Destruction Derby*'s rather awkward conduct and you are left feeling distinctly short changed. Oh sure, you can argue until a bovine return is on the cards about how stock cars cannot race with the accuracy of a racer on the road; but even continued exposure to the game doesn't leave one convinced that the writers' attempts to make the control 'realistic' has actually done anything to improve the game.

As there's no option to turn off the car damage (okay, it wouldn't be a very destructive derby but it sure would be nice to finish the races a little more often), more precise



1 You can watch a replay of every race and even determine where the cameras are placed. 2 The inside-the-car perspective is the easiest way to drive and the most exciting. 3 Woah. The Destruction Derby free-for-all takes place in a bowl - no escape route.



■ PUBLISHER:

SCE ■ DEVELOPER:

SIS

■ RELEASE DATE:

October

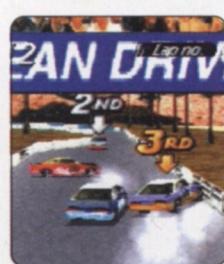
UK

■ PRICE:

£44.99

Style:

Racing game



car control would enhance proceedings immeasurably. **Careering along using the inside-the-car view is hellishly exciting (and indeed the easiest control view) as you wallop other motors, bits of the cars splintering off in all directions.** But as soon as you get jammed or spun, you have to switch to the outside perspective to find out where you are. And using this view the car control is slightly more difficult, the car veering at the slightest pad nudge and never helped by the ongoing pounding your vehicle takes.

So we've kicked *Destruction Derby* to the ground. Let us give it chance to rise above its knees. Race details, first. Wreckin' Racing affords points to the driver who does most damage to other vehicles, though you must complete a desired number of laps. Stock Car Racing is a bolt to the line – no collision points detected – while Time Trials is, not surprisingly, a race against the clock.

The final option is *Destruction Derby* itself, set in a huge bowl, the sole aim being to win points by

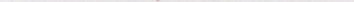
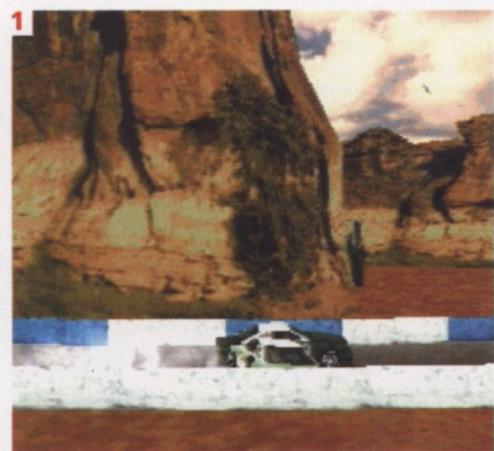
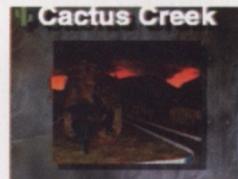
bashing other drivers 180° and 360°. Much kudos to the last car limping around the arena. You start at the outer point of the bowl and head towards the middle, a plethora of cars doing the same before the inevitable mighty collision in the centre, followed by a wanton free-for-all. It's spectacular, and a deal better with a few mates to pit a points battle.

Destruction Derby is a splendid looker, its occasional graphic glitches forgiven – crivens, just glance at the screenshots. As your car takes more of a pasting, so it crunches accordingly, smoke eventually pouring from the engine. Even when most cars are on screen at once, the pace rarely drops significantly. A link mode allows those with two machines, two copies of the game and the requisite cable to join up and race – though it doesn't add massively to the shebang.

No, what we have here is a racing game which is enjoyable in spite of its faults. Better car control, an option to turn off the destruction, and a hint of a clue as to where to turn after being spun at crossroads would have improved things enormously. If this were a game show, this correspondent would strike a gong approvingly and shout 'with reservations' fairly loudly.

Levels

OCEAN DRIVE



1) Replay mode, here, as you watch those errors in full. 2) Arrows point to the cars in first, second and third. 3) Control using the outside view is horribly difficult. Witness the idiot bouncing from barrier to barrier. 4) Car number 23, your time is almost up. Positively Penelope Pitstopian vehicle, that. 5) Doctor on the go. 'What about me in the middle?'

Destruction Derby has six courses, two of which feature cross overs, a major source of irritation when you spin at crossroads and lose your sense of direction.

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS: Superb. Really nicely done 9
 ■ SOUND: More samples, please 7
 ■ LIFESPAN: Longevity in doubt 6

■ GAMEPLAY: Patchy but exciting 7
 ■ PRESENTATION: No frills, but fine 7
 ■ ORIGINALITY: An unusual racer 8

This game succeeds in spite of itself. Glaring faults are forgiven as you bash your way around, the cars denting beyond recognition. Muted applause, please.

7 out of 10

NBA Jam: Tournament Edition

PSM goes **One on one** with this **Swish** basketball trailblazer and finds its gameplay to be **unrivalled** in the sporting stakes



At the half-time break, you'll be delighted to learn that full motion video sequences of NBA players in action are shown. And here are some.



This correspondent has just finished an exhausting game of *NBA Jam*. Beaten but not disgraced by Lucifer's dastard dunkmeister from sister magazine *Edge*, the score finished 132-130 after two periods of overtime, the Knicks finally overcome by the never-say-die spirit of Orlando Magic. Sure, it was mighty close. Both teams had their chances, both at times throwing away seemingly unassailable leads. But let there be no bitterness. Oh bloody no. Anyway, what's done is done. No point pondering over what might have been, eh? Stupid to keep reflecting, remembering that clear run on the basket with seconds remaining – only to completely LOUSE IT UP.

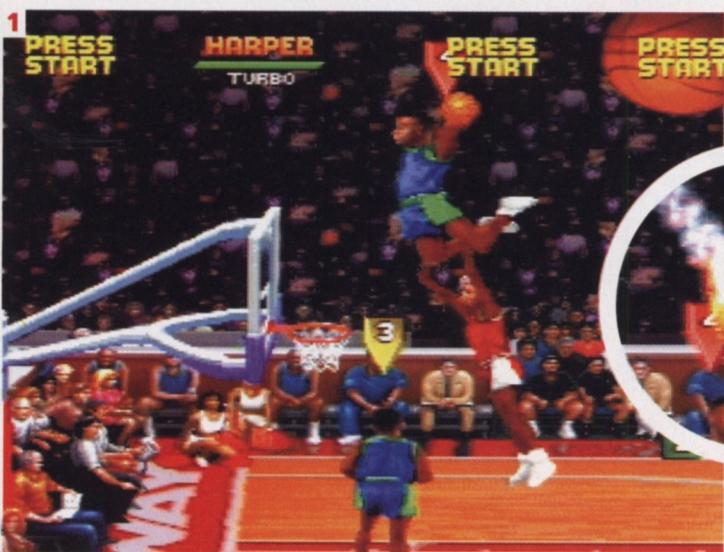
NBA Jam: Tournament Edition is remarkably engaging. It's the kind of game that makes your armpits perspire. Forget gas central heating, begone woolly jumper; a few quarters of rim-ramming, hoopular high jinks is enough to

keep you warm on a chilly autumn day. It's a blindingly simple idea. You hotfoot around a basketball court aiming to outshoot your opponent. Four players are on court and up to four people can play – if you're the proud owner of a Sony Multi-Tap™ adaptor.

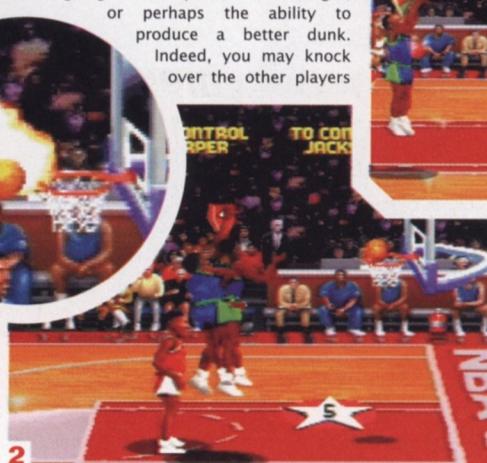
All 27 National Basketball Association teams are included, each of the players having eight different skill

attributes ranging from speed to the slightly bizarre 'clutch', which apparently reflects a players' ability to 'come through' when the going gets tough. During the game the players can pick up injuries, so if the opposition has got a particularly strong performer you can concentrate on whacking him, neutralising his influence in the process. And when they're doing it to you, you can make substitutions after each quarter.

So it's a sports game straight and true, right? Well, yes and no. Head into the Special Features menu and you can add spice to the dish by turning on the 'hot spots' and power-ups. Hot spots are areas which intermittently flash on court – score from them and you get bonus points. Collect a power-up and you might get extra speed, extra strength, or perhaps the ability to produce a better dunk. Indeed, you may knock over the other players



1 [1] Here's Harper in Turbo mode. What is that, you ask? Oh, go on, please. Hold down the shoulder button, gain more speed and score spectacular baskets.



2 [2] Note the star with 'five' upon it. Place yourself on this spot and 'shoot a hoop' and, lo, you score five. [3] Shoot three consecutive baskets while ensuring your opponent replies not, and the ball sparks flames forthwith. [Inset] And here is a ball on fire, yesterday afternoon.

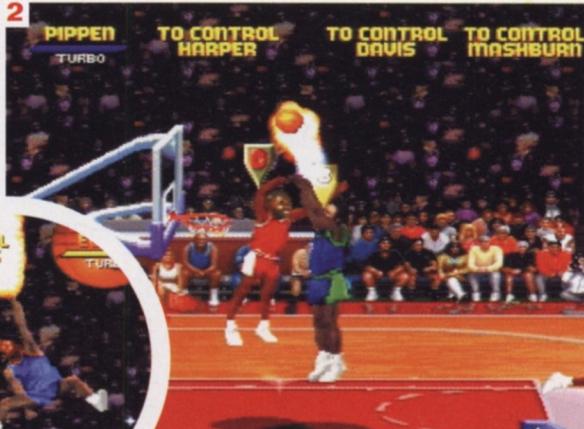


■ PUBLISHER:
■ RELEASE DATE:
■ PRICE:

Acclaim
Out now
£39.99

■ DEVELOPER:
■ ORIGIN:
■ STYLE:

Midway
United States
Sports game



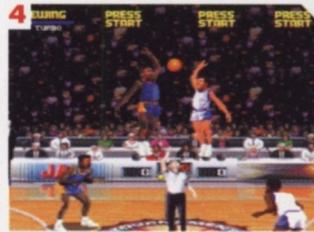
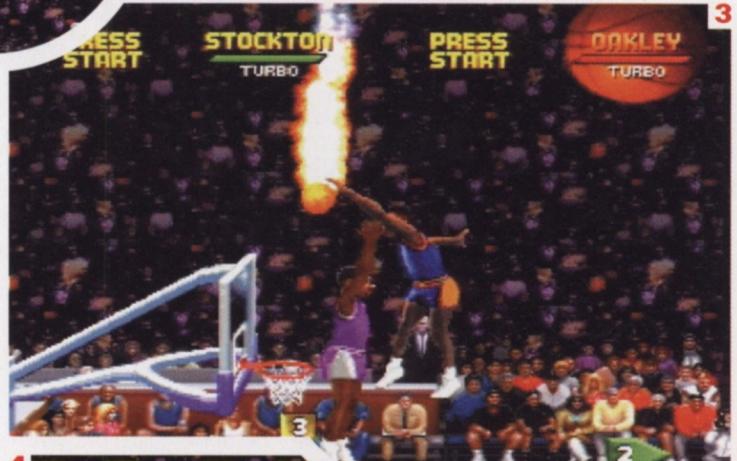
with the bomb icon and, **best of all**, 'catch fire' - and watch the flames trail from the ball as it heads for the net.

Collecting the bits and hitting the spots can lead the player into neglecting the main business of outscoring opponent but if you're eight points down with five seconds left, it can give you the chance to turn the game around with a last ditch nine-point hoop. In truth, *NBA* is best in straight guise, though many may beg to differ.

It's always a good sign in sports games when you're able to pick up the basics in minutes. You can with *NBA*, and more importantly, the longer you play the better it gets as you master swift passing movements, indulge in gravity-defying dunking manoeuvres and perfect the three-point baskets. The only confusion, initially, is getting used to the 2D viewpoint - particularly when you're defending. On occasions you think you're under the basket, only to discover you're almost in the crowd. No matter. A minor gripe, and you quickly adapt.

NBA Jam isn't the most sophisticated piece of next-generation software. In blunt terms, it falls way short of the visual allure of, say, *Toshinden*. The players' heads look ludicrously large and the crowd appears the same at both ends of the court. But in terms of gameplay, there isn't a two-player PlayStation sports game to match it. Of course the operative word is 'yet' but *NBA* is here and now. The vocal samples are splendid, the commentator chipping in such classics as, 'He's on fire' and 'Boomshakalaka' (hopeful spelling). Sounds trite but it all adds to the fun.

Even if you think basketball the worst sport since netball, the thrill of *NBA Jam* is in its simple gameplay. Go on, you'll play it to death.



1) The unsuspecting defence chappie is about to get a 'Michael Jackson' cut.
2) And here's another picture of a ball on fire. We're not even that good. 3) At this point, the commentator bellows (Geddit? Eh? Eh?) 'He's on fire'. 4) A tip-off. Like a kick-off. Inset! He's showing off now.

More dunking than a Women's Institute coffee morning



By far the most spectacular aspect of *NBA Jam* is the dunking manoeuvre on Turbo. The players jump high into the air - often right up to the ceiling of the hall - before spinning and falling back to earth and planting the ball with a whoomph. And check out the mid-air splits - could go horribly wrong, huh?

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:

Basic, basically

6 ■ GAMEPLAY:

Simple yet smashing

8 ■ PRESENTATION:

Functional

6 ■ ORIGINALITY:

Weeell. Not really, no.

■ SOUND:

'It's on fire'

8 ■ LIFESPAN:

'Til the death

8 ■ ORIGINALLY:

Weeell. Not really, no.

5 ■ DEVELOPER:

Acclaim

6 ■ ORIGIN:

Midway

United States

Sports game

X-COM: Enemy Unknown

A PlayStation game without **cutting edge graphics** and driving sound?

Has MicroProse lost its marbles,

or is there **more to this** than meets the eye...



After glancing at the screen shots on these pages you might be forgiven for thinking that there's been a mistake. Surely this isn't really a game for the PlayStation? Perhaps there's been a mix-up and a review from one of those snorey PC magazines has somehow slipped into PSM? Well, sort of. Software giant MicroProse has been busily converting this, its smash PC strategy hit, to Sony's top-of-the-range machine – and the result is impressive.

X-COM: *Enemy Unknown* is set at the end of the century. Around the world UFO sightings have reached an all-time high and tales of abductions are rife. Alarmed by the sheer number of reports, many governments have launched their own investigations and have come to unsettling conclusions: not only are the aliens real, but they also seem intent on conquest. In response, all the major powers have banded together and created a top-secret, multinational

Anyone looking for something a

little more thoughtful and absorbing than

the usual arcade fare is in for a real treat

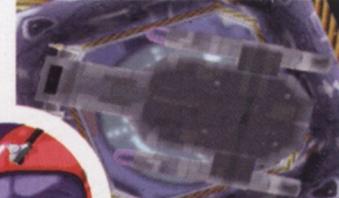
organisation, dubbed X-COM, in order to fight the aliens. And for no apparent reason, they've put you in charge.

Starting with a single base and the bare minimum of personnel, it's your job to defend the earth from the alien threat. Technologically outclassed, you must not only find and destroy the aliens and their craft, but capture and analyse as much of their equipment as possible. Only by using your enemies' weapons against them do you stand a chance of victory.

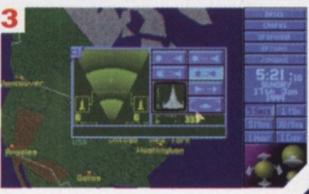
The game itself is split into two main sections. The first revolves around the Geoscape, a fully rotatable and scalable map of the earth, and this is where the strategic side of things is handled. Your main task in X-COM is first to detect and then shoot down or destroy UFOs, preventing them from completing their nasty objectives. As such you must build bases around the world so that you can house your radar systems and interceptor craft, as well as your scientists, engineers and soldiers. Unfortunately all this costs money, and X-COM only has limited funding.

In order to secure more cash you must convince the world's governments of your ability by making the best use of what you've got. The more UFOs you shoot down, the more funding you'll receive at the end of each month. Let too many of the pesky alien craft go by unmolested, though, and the governments effected cut their spending on the X-COM project. If things carry on like this for too long, the disgruntled leaders may well decide to conspire with the aliens. If all your financial backers abandon you, the game is over and the aliens win.

Of course with all these UFOs flying about, eventually you're going to discover one that's



1 Your trusty squad of elite soldiers explores a UFO crash site. 2 Building and maintaining bases around the world is vital to success. 3 When your interceptors, erm, intercept a UFO, you get to watch the battle on radar. 4 The obligatory animations are quite nicely done...





■ PUBLISHER:

MicroProse

■ DEVELOPER:

MicroProse

■ RELEASE DATE:

Out now

■ ORIGIN:

UK

■ PRICE:

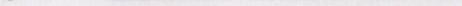
TBA

■ STYLE:

Strategy



1] Look! It's a rather unconvincing UFO! 2] Running back to the wreck of its ship won't save this ET. 3] Erm, didn't we see this guy on the *X-Files* last week? 4, 5, 6, 7] The 'UFOpedia' is an on-line reference, keeping you up to date on all the research you've done so far. It's even got pretty pictures. 8] The sneaky aliens tend to hide around corners, so be careful.



landed and, more often than not, your interceptors will force a UFO to crash-land without completely destroying it. This is where the second half of *X-COM* comes into play, as you send out troops to assault the downed alien craft. When your trusty guys and gals reach their targets, the game switches to an overhead isometric view and you control troops in a turn-based tactical war game. The aim is to kill or capture all the surviving aliens in order to salvage their technology which your scientists can then research, thus allowing access to new weapons, armour and craft.

It has to be said that *X-COM* is not the most visually stunning PlayStation game to be released so far, and neither is the sound exactly awesome. On top of that, the action is far from immediate – in fact you have to play for some time before anything interesting starts to happen. But despite these lacklustre initial impressions, anyone looking for something a little more thoughtful and absorbing than the more usual arcade fare is in for a real treat.

Provided that you have a mouse (you can

play with the standard controller but it's not recommended), a reliable memory card and some patience, *X-COM: Enemy Unknown* is a classic strategy game. There's more depth, subtlety and longevity packed into this one game than in a dozen beat 'em ups or racing games; and if you take the time to get into it, guaranteed you'll be hooked for months.

Admittedly, this is not going to be to everyone's taste and anyone who's played the PC version will find little changed, except for some improved sound and the odd animated sequence. But more than anything else released for the PlayStation so far, *X-COM: Enemy Unknown* shows the true potential of the machine to break away from the traditional 'console' fare.



1] A little bit of research, and your troops get to wear some dead 'ard armour suits. 2] Having blown a nasty little alien to bits, a soldier looks around for more cannon fodder. 3] Leaving the landing craft is often the riskiest part of a mission...



VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Flat yet functional 6	■ GAMEPLAY:	Absorbing rather than manic 9
■ SOUND:	Atmospheric but forgettable 7	■ PRESENTATION:	No glitz 7
■ LIFESPAN:	It'll out-live you 9	■ ORIGINALITY:	Innovative console game 8

As a strategy game this is going to take some beating. If you feel like something a little less frantic and a little more thoughtful than the norm, this is the one to try.

8
out of 10



Ridge Racer

NAMCO's first offering for the PlayStation has been variously hailed as the best **arcade conversion** of all time, and a **one-course phenomenon**



For the few gamers who have not yet been introduced to the pleasures of *Ridge Racer*, this was the first title to make it on to Japanese shelves when the PlayStation made its debut. A conversion of Namco's awesome coin-op, *Ridge Racer* is neither 'arcade-perfect' nor two-player. But it is bloody impressive.

That the Japanese code house had but a scant few months to convert its massively complex coin-op to the PlayStation's brand new hardware is testament both to the mental agility of Namco's engineers and to the prowess of Sony's silicon plumbing. Sony couldn't have wished for a more elegant standard-bearer for its machine, and gamers will have to look long and hard for a better pick up 'n' play adrenaline-rush. Apart from, maybe, a Californian lifeguard. Or a winning Lottery scratch-card.

But I digress. What of this ridge racing? There are actually precious few ridges in the game – the occasional bump, but no ridges. **To compensate, there's racing – and plenty of it. The full guided tour of the course begins in a cityscape**, passing briefly through a Monaco-style tunnel and then sweeping up to a majestic suspension bridge. From here, it is but a fierce left-hander down through a coastal resort and up into the hills. Another tunnel, and then the final section involves negotiating a still-in-construction single-lane bypass affair



Sony couldn't have wished for

a more elegant standard-bearer for its machine

before crossing the finish line. Forty man-years were spent developing the game and you can complete the course in around a minute.

And this is your one and only, single, solitary course. **Although Namco, being the ingenious blighter it is, has included a number of race meetings to avoid this being a one-play wonder.** After your standard two- and three-lap Grands Prix, you face a Time Trial, in which you race against a single, inhumanly swift opponent. Emerge victorious from all four meetings and you gain access to a new series of races, all a bit faster, with tougher opponents – and played around the track in reverse. **All of a sudden those oh-so-friendly curves and bends which you've carefully negotiated and memorised have gone, replaced by vicious hairpins and unforgiving corners.**

And it is in these latter four races that the real challenge lies: these courses are tough enough to warrant repeat plays, yet eminently achievable. You get frustrated, you get pissed off, you hurl the joypad as far as the little lead will allow it to go – but you'll keep on playing until you get it right. And get it right you must, for the final race relies on an almost perfect mastery of the course – one good collision and you may as well reset and start again.

Admittedly *Ridge Racer* is far from ideal – the tweaks and cheats are mere trickery to extend the life of the game. But there is a subtlety of gameplay here that only manifests itself with time. Practice does make perfect.

And unlike many driving games we could mention, *Ridge Racer* feels really good. As you gradually master your chosen vehicle, powersliding around bends and sneaking through the smallest of gaps, it provides a simply unbeatable gaming experience. A classic.



Edited highlights: around the track in eighty seconds



[1] Attack of the Enormous 12ft Scoreboard Woman starts the race.
[2] All the other cars bugger off over the horizon and beneath a flyover.
[3] You catch the first tail-enders passing under a giant Galaga game.

[4] An eerily-lit tunnel provides your first car-passing challenge.
[5] Exit to a sharp right-hander – look out for the blatant Cyber Sled advertisement on your left.
[6] A suspension bridge, no less.

[7] You sweep down toward the depressingly empty coastal region.
[8] Then up into the gloriously striated canyon section.
[9] Emerging from another tunnel into the retina-splitting daylight.

[10] Foot hard to the floor as a stretch of open road beckons.
[11] The final right-hander is deceptively curvaceous.
[12] And over the finishing line to come... well, winning isn't important.



■ PUBLISHER:

SCE/Namco

■ DEVELOPER:

Namco

■ RELEASE DATE:

Out now

■ ORIGIN:

Japan

■ PRICE:

£44.99

■ STYLE:

Racing simulation



1) Namco isn't ashamed of a little self-publicity. 2) The overhead scoreboard displays the current race leader. 3) Number 13 - the evil black car which drives like a demon. 4) Complete the course, and your racing prowess (or lack thereof) is replayed. 5) The impressive LA-style cityscape vista. 6) Dusk, and the sky turns, er, brown. 7) Negotiate the course fast enough, and you can actually hit this helicopter. 8) At night the windows in this building light up to form the face of Pac-Man. 9) The tunnels boast spookily accurate light and sound effects.



VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:
■ SOUND:
■ LIFESPAN:

Impressive scenery 8
Terrific rave tracks 9
Always good for a spin 7

■ GAMEPLAY:
■ PRESENTATION:
■ ORIGINALITY:

Handles perfectly 9
Slick and stylish 8
Nothing really new 4

One of the most auspicious gaming debuts on any machine, ever. Namco's programmers are gods to whom you should sacrifice your cash, now.

9
out of 10



■ PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Ent. ■ DEVELOPER: Media Vision
 ■ RELEASE DATE: Out now ■ ORIGIN: Japan
 ■ PRICE: £39.99 ■ STYLE: Platform shoot 'em up

Rapid Reload

Already a hit in Japan,
 Sony's frenetic platform shoot 'em up blasts into the
 UK boasting a new name, but little new in the way of gameplay



1 One of the few 'nice' graphical effects: a transparent beam of light sprays across the scenery. 2 In this swamp level, you encounter a variety of enemies from slithery serpents to armoured woodlice. With guns sticking out of them.



congregation of alien beings aboard the USS Enterprise look semi-attractive. Well, in a certain sort of light. From the cannon-fodder minions to the mid-level guardians and ominous end-of-level bosses, you see plenty of variety in terms of both looks and attack formations. Formations which can easily be memorised, by the way.

Graphically *Rapid Reload* doesn't really offer anything that stunning. In fact the whole affair wouldn't look out of place on a Super Nintendo: the colours are bright, the limited animation is functional, and it all bounds along at a fairly chirpy pace. It's smooth and responsive too, with your tiny character leaping like a frog on blue Smarties and running with Olympic agility.

In short, this is actually quite fun in a mindless sort of way. All you need in order to succeed is the talent to depress the fire-button continuously, leap around a lot, and duck when you think it prudent. Really taxing stuff. Hopefully this isn't going to be state-of-play for many PlayStation shoot 'em ups. It's not exactly pushing the hardware to the limits but it is relatively compelling... for a few hours at least.



Graphically *Rapid Reload* doesn't really offer anything that stunning. In fact the whole affair wouldn't look out of place on a Super Nintendo

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Cute 'n' colourful 5	■ GAMEPLAY:	Simple, fun gunplay 7
■ SOUND:	Explosive, but run-of-the-mill 5	■ PRESENTATION:	Few frills 4
■ LIFESPAN:	Longevity isn't its strength 4	■ ORIGINALITY:	What do you think? 1

Despite its innate simplicity *Rapid Reload* triumphs in the 'Die, alien scum!' and 'Ha-haa, got you' sense. As for long-lasting appeal - forget it.

5 out of 10

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Lemmings 3D

This classic **action-puzzler** has been on every games machine known to man.

But only now have the **suicidal creatures**
been able to die in the **third dimension...**

No shooting, a complete absence of fast cars and not a ninja – texture-mapped or otherwise – to be found. Not even a small one. No, *Lemmings 3D* (and hands up those who can guess the simple twist on the old theme) is an elaborate and very addictive puzzle game. Okay, so the word 'puzzle' doesn't usually conjure up waves of sweaty-palmed, buttock-shaking excitement, but *Lemmings 3D* is different. It's the sort of game that will fill you with a warm, satisfying glow – a bit like having eaten two bowls of Ready Brek on a cold winter's morning.

Although it has a simple theme, this is a fiendishly difficult game. As in the previous *Lemmings* titles, you have to guide a troop of Lemmings across various hazard-filled levels before the time limit runs out. On each level, your lobotomised burdens are assigned one of nine predetermined actions; so there's Digger (click on him and he digs through floors), Floater (the plucky Lemming that

parachutes from great heights), Builder (he constructs a bridge) and so on. To finish each screen you must make use of these skills in various combinations to herd your witless Lemms to the exit door.

And that's the game in a nutshell. If you start a level with three Builders, two Climbers and a Basher you don't have to be a University Professor to work out that you'll probably have to build a bridge or two, climb a wall and tunnel through something solid before you can reach the exit. Originality? Pah! *Lemmings 3D* is the same tried and trusted formula of old, but this time not only do you have to save hundreds of the green-haired idiots from throwing themselves off cliff tops, you have to save them all in three dimensions rather than two.

Thankfully this is less of a nightmare than it sounds. You do need an orderly mind and boundless patience to progress on to the harder levels, but this is a very easy



[1] Most of the levels in *Lemmings 3D* have a set theme. This is the Aliens level – dark, moody, with big wall fans and pools of acid. [2] Accompany your idiotic Lemms across rope bridges, over walls and through tunnels. [3] Send your Lemmings towards the blocks and then blow up a couple up to let the others through. [4] A real nightmare of a level. You have to build bridges between the blocks in order to reach the exit.

Tower assault: steering the Lemmings heavenward



[1] The Tower level looks daunting but all you do is climb to the top and parachute down to the exit. You need to save 20. [2] Firstly, place Turners at the corners of the stairwars to guide the Lemmings upwards. [3] Repeat this ad nauseam all the way up to the top of the tower. [4] If you come across a gap, choose a Builder to construct a bridge across it. [5] Finally, use the Floater skill to parachute 20 Lemmings to safety. Job done, next level.



■ PUBLISHER:	Sony Interactive Ent.	■ DEVELOPER:	Clockwork Games
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	UK
■ PRICE:	£40 - £45	■ STYLE:	Arcade puzzler



game to get into. The puzzles are no trickier than the ones in *Lemmings 2*, but with the addition of a third dimension, manipulating and controlling your Lemmings becomes slightly more difficult.

There are 80 levels in the game, ranging from tricky mazes to army assault courses, medieval castles to Egyptian tombs. Brightly coloured and somewhat garish, these polygonal levels rise in complexity from the Fun scenarios to the brain-twisting challenge of the Mayhem levels and, accordingly, there's a variety of different puzzles to tax your brain cells.

Guiding your Lemmings out of the gloomy, Aliens-style corridors, for example, is a simple A to B wander. The Tower level is also perfectly logical, but Dot To Dot – a level that gives you 20 Builders, a couple of Turners (these guys turn your Lemmings through 90 degrees) and a world full of floating blocks – is an absolute nightmare to plan and complete. Likewise the Lemmhanger level, where you have to move your Lemmings from one jet aircraft to another in mid-flight, requires timing and infinite persistence.

Lemmings 3D is impeccably presented. The rendered intro sequence, where flat 2D Lemmings explode into 3D life after emerging from a computer, is excellent. And if you haven't played any of the *Lemmings* games before, there's a welcome practice option available too. Here you can familiarise yourself



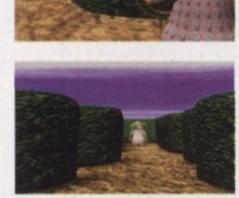
with the various Lemming skills, play demos that show you how the actions work, and take tutorials that explain obstacles in the game – such as trampolines, teleports and one-way floors. Best of all, if you've failed on a level, *Lemmings 3D* has a replay facility which enables you to watch where you went wrong, then lets you jump back into the game to change it.

Of course practice makes perfect, and the more you play around with *Lemmings 3D* the more confident and skilful you'll become. It's a game that you either love or hate, and if you bought a PlayStation because you're a speed-freak and an action jockey, then this title isn't going to yank your gaming chain. But if you're prepared to play something a little slower – something that requires a little planning and thought – with 80 levels to wade through, *Lemmings 3D* is fun, captivating and a game that is going to last you quite a while.

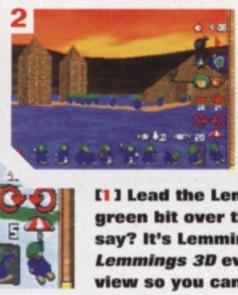
It isn't going to win any awards for originality, though, and it isn't jam-packed with clever graphics or revolutionary sound-effects; but if you're prepared to spend some time mastering it, you'll find that the puzzles will rattle your brain like nothing else you've ever played. The 3D angle gives the game a whole new twist and although the movable camera views are a bugger to control using the gamepad, playing with the mouse makes things a whole lot easier.

All in all, *Lemmings 3D* doesn't push the PlayStation to the limit and it's not going to set the 32-bit gaming world alight, but what it does have is rampant playability. Sometimes that's far more important than flashy graphics and full-motion video clips.

1 Guide your hapless Lemmings across the golfing fairway and into the hole. **2** Remember that aerial robbery in *Cliffhanger*? Try doing it with Lemmings... **3** Before you start, the preview shows you what the level looks like, how long you've got to finish it and how many Lemmings you've got to save. **4** Practice, they say, makes perfect and here you can experiment with the various Lemming skills. **Inset** Lemmings are very versatile creatures and Deathsides hold no fear.



Lemmings 3D boasts the usual video frippery so beloved of next generation videogames.



1 Lead the Lemmings from green bit to green bit over the ice. **2** What can you say? It's Lemmings in Egypt. **3** Lemmings 3D even has a *Doom*-style 3D view so you can see the level first-hand.

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Neat but garish 6	■ GAMEPLAY:	Strangely addictive 8
■ SOUND:	Strangle the composer 4	■ PRESENTATION:	Impeccable 9
■ LIFESPAN:	How clever are you? 7	■ ORIGINALITY:	You're kidding right? 2

Love it or hate it, *Lemmings 3D* is addictive and extremely playable. Not a showcase PlayStation game, but a nice alternative to the norm.

8
out of 10



1 The weirdest boss you meet is this madcap clown-in-a-teacup, the grinning b... bozo. 2 Later on, Robbit gets a nasty case of the giant lobsters. 3, 4 One of the trickier bits is jumping from balloon to balloon to reach a carrot suspended far above.

Jumping Flash

Platform games have been around since the dawn of man but it's

taken until now for them to enter the

third dimension. PSM reckons this game's a real gas



Be warned: gamers of a nervous disposition, afeared of precipitous heights and prone to attacks of vertigo and nose bleeds should turn the page. For *Jumping Flash* takes you on a perilous platform adventure, leaping majestically from pillar to post high above the ground (which in turn hovers above the clouds). And you also get to shoot stuff, too.

Robbit – a robot rabbit – is the hero of the moment, charged with a mission to thwart the dreaded Baron Aloha, an intergalactic property developer, no less.

The Baron has stolen vast tracts of your planet, in order to create huge floating holiday villas in space. And that's the honest truth.

But apart from some glossy video sequences, scenario and game actually share little common ground, so let's dispense with the made-up-ities and progress directly to the hands-on stuff.

The real point of *Jumping Flash* is simply to collect four large carrot-shaped power-ups. These are secreted around each level on platforms of varying height



and accessibility: some are very low and easily seen, some are mind-bogglingly high and buggers to locate.

Predictably, Robbit is able to hurl himself skyward with some force. **Time your button-presses correctly and the mechanical leporid performs three such gravity-defying jumps, cumulatively hurling himself hundreds of feet in the air.** And therein lies the game: by a mixture of precision leaping and seat-of-the-pants-throwing-yourself-into-the-abysstype manoeuvres, you have to seek out the four carotty objects and exit the level.

Hindrances include a variety of nefarious, missile-gobbling creatures – flowers, hippos, giraffes, frogs, fat purple things on legs, and so on – that bar your path and fire harmful substances at you. **These are dispatched by shooting them or by landing on them from a height – preferably a great one.**

Complete three levels and (surprise, surprise) a boss monster appears in its own arena, waiting for you to kill it – or, more typically, vice versa. These end-of-world guardians are often the biggest challenge that the game offers up, as the straightforward platform stages – especially the early



At the end of World 1, Robbit has to face this fireball-spitting dragon. For a big, scaly reptile with Napalm breath, he's a real pussy – unleash any bombs you might have collected, and then jump on his head. A lot.





■ PUBLISHER:	Sony Computer Ent.	■ DEVELOPER:	In-house
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	Japan
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	3D platform game



[1] This lava-strewn landscape is a major hazard to sensitive bunny feet. [2] Robbit's-eye-view of the psychedelic invincibility power-up in action. [3] The underground sections are moody, but dull. [4] A typical *Jumping Flash* view: still pictures fail to capture the full majesty of this game. [5] Another dizzying view of the high-ways.

ones – are far from impossible (although the time limits have been tightened up from the Japanese original). This is slightly annoying as battling the bosses merely gets in the way of the real fun, which is throwing yourself around tiny platforms, buildings and balloons suspended in the stratosphere.

The play mechanics of *Jumping Flash* are brilliantly honed, so that you frequently have to take leaps of faith toward platforms you're not quite sure you'll reach. Later levels have tiny ledges and floating balloons which you have to negotiate with your clumsy big bunny feet.

And the superlative fairground world has Robbit scooting around the place on towering, multicoloured rollercoasters – a singular gaming experience and no small error.

There are some six worlds in all, split into two areas plus the boss bits. So in total there's just 18 areas – and a couple of them are boring underground levels, where Robbit is like a caged bird, unable to utilise his greatest asset. However, SCE has updated the UK game with a redesigned World 5, and *Ridge Racer*-style 'Extra Worlds' which you access upon completion of the game (as long as your score is high enough!). So there's actually a lot of game to be had if you stick with it.

To suggest that *Jumping Flash* is innovative is a criminal understatement: there's never been anything quite like this in terms of sheer brain-popping wow factor. Peering over a ledge, about a thousand feet in the air, is an awesome feeling; jumping off that ledge is a blast.

The ability to shoot things does feel like something of an afterthought: you can envisage the designers thinking, 'Well, if we don't put some shooting in, no one will buy it'. But it might have been more in keeping with the theme of

To suggest that *Jumping Flash* is

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the game simply to rely on Robbit's size 27 stompers to destroy the baddies. Blasting them out of existence feels like a cheat, somehow.

Still, *Jumping Flash* is a very, very clever game.

The hazy depth-cued graphics are spot on, and the gameplay – though less than perfect – is captivating enough to keep your average player battling away for a couple of weeks.

And should you defeat the good Baron, you'll no doubt find the odd moment when you load up *Jumping Flash*, just to revel in the sheer thrill of leaping around like a rapid Robbit. This, dear readers, is what 32-bit gaming is all about.



Climax of the water world is a tussle with a turtle. Not an overly imposing assailant, you may think, but in fact he's a bit of a sod.

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Vertigo-inducing 8	■ GAMEPLAY:	Astounding airborne action 8	<i>Jumping Flash</i> is one of the new breed of games that only PlayStation can do. It's a whole new gaming experience, so if you can afford it, jump at the chance!
■ SOUND:	Standard aural accompaniment 5	■ PRESENTATION:	Bizarre video clips 6	
■ LIFESPAN:	A flash in the pan, really 5	■ ORIGINALITY:	Totally new concept 9	

8
out of 10

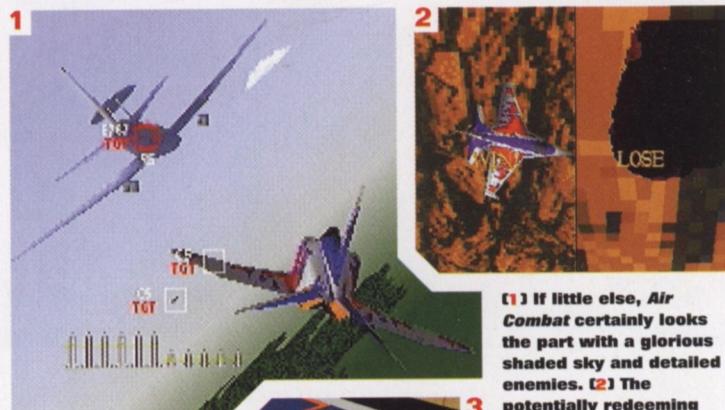
Air Combat

What it lacks in **technical frills**, Namco's new flight sim more than compensates for in **great visuals**, diverse gameplay and a **satisfying share** of pure, invigorating action

Are you one of those people who could spend all day watching aircraft flying in close formation? If so, the intro to *Air Combat* – complete with dramatic framing, panning and divine lens flare effects – will blow off your World War I flying goggles. Those who can't be bothered to read the bumf that comes with the disc are informed by a dreadful voiceover, almost straight after switching on, that you're a sort of mercenary combat pilot who just happens to be wealthy enough to kit himself out with three jet fighters.

Next, Bad-Voiceover-Man tells you that there's a bit of a ruck going on in a fictional area of the world and that if you can sort it out, you'll receive a pile of cash in return. That's the plot. Then up comes the map and you select the first of 17 dangerous missions. Thereafter you're free to choose one of your three planes and you are briefed on the mission ahead – this can range from simply making a reconnaissance flight over a stretch of sparsely protected terrain to taking on a whole fleet of war ships and their circling aerial protectors.

As soon as the mission starts you'll get your first taste of the real flavour of the game – a delicious mix of simple, high-paced gameplay wrapped in some sumptuous visuals. As far as controlling your plane goes, it's only slightly more complex than driving a go-kart (not surprising, considering this is a conversion of a coin-guzzling arcade game). You can bank left and right, dive and climb, accelerate and slow



[1] If little else, *Air Combat* certainly looks the part with a glorious shaded sky and detailed enemies. **[2]** The potentially redeeming two-player mode is ruined by taking place inside a tiny canyon, with sod-all room to manoeuvre. **[3]** One F-4 Phantom, going cheap. One owner, low mileage, bloody awful paint job...



[1] At this point a disembodied voice croons 'pull up, pull up', moments before you inevitably don't. **[2]** A built-in game of bingo adds another level of fun.



down, and release either missiles or gunfire. Simpler still, it soon becomes plain that you really don't need ever to hit the brakes or use the gunfire. If you've come to the PlayStation after years of PC flight sim experience, you're no doubt going to be a bit flummoxed by this technical flimsiness; but push the desire to be an airline pilot aside for a moment and, with luck, the action-loving geezer inside will realise what a buzz this simplicity can be.

Then there are the graphics, which range from positively stunning to pretty ropey. The plane you're flying is a bit of a crate, and in truth if a real aircraft was as shoddily assembled as the ill-fitting polygons here it would never get off the ground. Fortunately you rarely get to see your own plane (unless you choose the chase view) and the enemy planes appear much more effective as they hurtle by at a rate of knots. The ground-based targets don't move so fast but luckily they're far more detailed, so all in all everything holds together pretty well. The overall impression is that of a great-looking game that moves smoothly and effectively – with the exception of meandering canyon sections which, because of the coarse texture-mapping, tend to be a little confusing.

But there needs to be more than exhilarating gameplay



Strategic air command

It's possible to finish the whole game with just a few planes, but you do need to employ a little strategy. **[1]** On mission 7 choose this little plane. It's great at manoeuvring. **[2]** Should be no problem to negotiate this rocky pass. Oh, and use the external view. **[3]** This time use a plane with decent defence. **[4]** As even though this is just a recce mission, you will encounter some nasty adversaries.





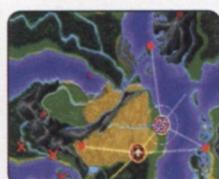
■ PUBLISHER:	SCE/Namco	■ DEVELOPER:	Namco
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now	■ ORIGIN:	Japan
■ PRICE:	£39.99	■ STYLE:	Air combat simulator



The pre-rendered intro to *Air Combat* is a real beaut, with simulated lens-flare [1], eyebrow-raising fly-pasts [2], and realistic motion blur on the planes [3]. Even the air brakes on the jets work properly [4]. And, to be fair to Namco, the in-game visuals aren't a whole lot worse, either.

...the real flavour of the game – a

delicious mix of simple, high-paced gameplay wrapped in some sumptuous visuals



and great visuals (well, bar a few tatty bits). And the cheery news is that there's plenty of variety in gameplay. There are few similar missions, and while every one of them is going to be a variation on the shove-a-rocket-up-someone's-tailpipe theme, there's been plenty of careful thought on how to keep things interesting. **For a start, all the missions are connected, in that you are fighting one specific regime over a relatively small region.** As you progress through the levels, the narrative explains the enemy's movements and how the previous missions have affected their progress. And within the missions themselves each task is as different as it can be; so you could be escorting a plane on one mission, shooting boats on the next, perhaps destroying refineries and pipelines after that – and so on.

To the game's credit, by the time you reach the last few missions, you get an overwhelming sense of having made some progress against the enemy. Also, each time you complete a mission you're awarded a cash payout, which can then be used to buy more planes – ranging from the minute and highly manoeuvrable A10 to the sluggish (and frankly useless) F117 stealth bomber.

But there's almost always a downside. And this time the thorn in the side/fly in the ointment/knob in the butter is

Mission briefing



To illustrate *Air Combat*'s variety, here's a rundown of every mission. [1] Simply shoot stuff. [2] Prevent the bombers from destroying your base. [3] Unknown units are approaching – blast them. [4] The city has been evacuated, so bomb it. [5] Strafe the oil field and the four surrounding refineries. [6] Oh mi god, they're mining. Blow up their equipment. [7] Take out the radar station at the end of a tricky canyon section. [8] Destroy the facility and take out their bombers too. [9] Shoot boat before it docks. [10] Escort plane for POW rescue. [11] Bombers are after your port. Stop them. [12] A fleet of ships is on the move. Sort it. [13] A recce mission look about and shoot some planes. [14] One last fuel depot to take out. [15] Hit the bridge to stop the advance. [16] Negotiate the underground canyon. [17] They've got a really big plane. Missiles away!

the lifespan. It may sound old-fashioned, but if by the second day of owning your game you're not still gagging to play it, it's simply not doing its job properly. Problem is, your correspondent might have been gagging to play this one, had he not finished the whole game on two of the three skill levels in one afternoon. There's always the split-screen dogfight option, but this head-to-head opportunity is actually a bit shallow and less fun than the main game.

Air Combat will no doubt get your heart pounding and head racing. But whereas you know for a fact that you'll be having another quick spin around *Ridge Racer* or *Wipeout* tomorrow, *Air Combat* won't be moving from the shelf. Been there, done that – end of story.



VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Smooth and speedy 7	■ GAMEPLAY:	Top Gun-ning 8	In terms of excitement <i>Air Combat</i> is an A-class product but it just doesn't deliver enough staying power. Its coin-op lineage is painfully apparent.
■ SOUND:	Fair enough 6	■ PRESENTATION:	Great intro and ending 8	
■ LIFESPAN:	Dear oh dear 4	■ ORIGINALITY:	Not really 4	

6
out of 10

Discworld

Terry Pratchett's acclaimed tales of Rincewind and the crazy realm known as the Discworld are here forever immortalised in pixels and sprites

Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* books have sold in their millions, making the series one of the most successful of all time, so it would be prudent to assume that a fair number of you reading *PSM* have at least one of the titles in your possession. If this is the case, you could reap a number of rewards from *Discworld*, Sony Interactive Entertainment's new point and click adventure.

On the other hand, to you Rincewind may be a condition experienced after eating a particularly malicious curry, in which case you probably won't find *Discworld* all that amusing – after all, Terry Pratchett's inimitable sense of humour certainly isn't to everyone's liking. And although he didn't actually write the game's script, the fact that the developers are avid Discworld fans means that both plot and script unfold with uncanny similarity to Terry's style. The uninitiated may indeed find this a bizarre game to plough through.

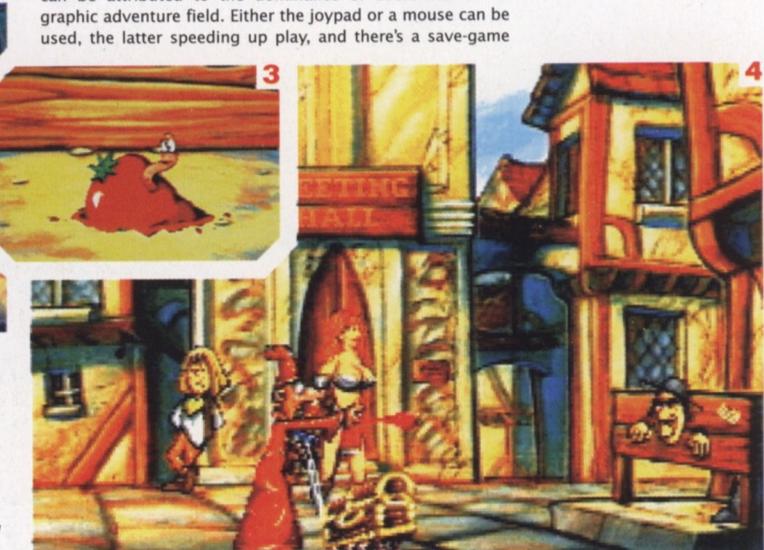
Why bizarre? The Discworld is a fantasy realm inhabited by a population currently enjoying a lifestyle akin to earth's Middle Ages – slop in the streets, plenty of decent drinking houses, witch hunts, tales of dragons, and so on. Sounds fair enough. Until you consider that the Discworld is in fact

a flat, er, disc carried through space on the backs of four elephants, which in turn stand atop a giant turtle called Great A'Tuin. The goings-on of the Discworld are even more outrageous – the most notable of which is the existence of Death, who rides around on a big white horse called Binky, talks in CAPITALS, loves cats, and occasionally stops reaping for the odd curry.

The game doesn't get any saner. Playing the part of a particularly inept wizard called Rincewind, you get the chance to experience the madness of the Discworld first-hand. Initially your mission is to rid the capital city, Ankh-



1 Pick-a-pocket-or-two down at the local barbers. 2 Forget pleasantries, insult the guards to gain access to the palace. 3 Is that a worm in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me? 4 A lifelong ambition is recognised – you get to throw a tomato at a tax collector!



1 Chim-chimneying Dick Van Dyke-style on the rooftops of sunny Ankh-Morpork. 2 Secret handshakes alone won't get you into this secret society.

Morpork, of a rampaging Red Dragon by finding five objects needed to construct a Dragon Detector – a massive undertaking in itself. But as the game unfolds the bombshell is dropped: this is only the first of four mammoth acts, culminating in around 100 man hours of play. Ouch.

So the game's huge, there's no denying it. It's also very accessible, with the generic mouse/pointer interface and on-screen hot spots coming as standard – something that can be attributed to the dominance of LucasArts in the graphic adventure field. Either the joypad or a mouse can be used, the latter speeding up play, and there's a save-game





■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.

■ DEVELOPER: Teeny Weeny Games

■ RELEASE DATE:

Out now

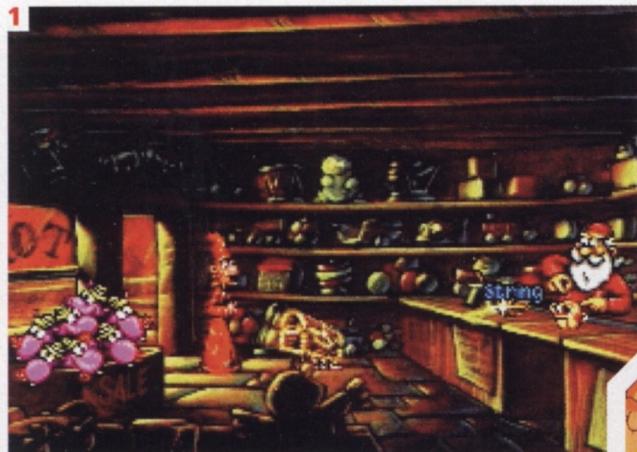
■ ORIGIN:

UK

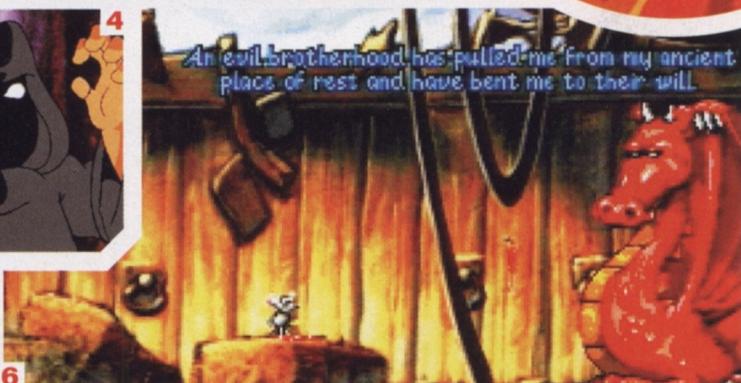
■ PRICE:

£40-£45

■ STYLE: Point and click adventure



1 Watch out for red herrings, especially in some of the dodgier outlets such as this tacky old corner shop. 2 All say 'Ah!' for the pretty background graphics. 3 'Oy, who are you calling a dress-wearing nancy boy?' 4 Aargh, not a pretty sight! Own up, who gave PSM's whip-wielding editor a bit-part in *Discworld* then? 5 Up, up, and away but not in a beautiful balloon...



As for the game structure itself,

this is one bloody tough title.

Frustratingly so

facility available in conjunction with a Memory Card.

Although this style of game would better suit a home computer, it actually makes a refreshing change to the usual frenzied speeding-shooting-slapping type games that befit consoles. Just be warned – there's nothing fancy about the graphics, just as there's nothing remarkably astounding about the gameplay. This is pretty much a straight port of the pretty yet modest PC original. The only significantly striking aspect about the whole affair is the addition of some lively speech provided by ex-Monty Pythoner Eric Idle, Tony 'Baldrick' Robinson, and Jon 'Wurzel Gummidge' Pertwee, among others.



Initially this is a real bonus – farce, slapstick, innuendo... Ultimately, though, what a trudge. Even as fans, those of us who struggled through this arduous adventure rapidly began to tire of the particularly abstruse humour. Before long chortles of marginal amusement deteriorated into frustrated cries of 'Ugh! Just get on with it!', while the dialogue bordered on the verbose.

As for the game structure itself, this is one bloody tough title. Frustratingly so. Many of the puzzle sequences are almost unfathomable, with the solutions proving too complicated for their own good. Although knowledgeable on Discworld trivia to a reasonable extent, we were at times at an impasse, struggling to try and piece together the seemingly disjointed clues into some coherent form. Perhaps *Discworld*'s design is just a little too obscure to be intuitively playable.

Ultimately, *Discworld* is one of the very few adventures that has been known to baffle its players to such an extraordinary extent; you'll certainly get your money's worth. Yet despite the degree of challenge on offer, PSM isn't convinced that this is the direction in which the PlayStation, and indeed its owners, will become accustomed to heading.



1 Inviting Death at such an early stage in the game is inadvisable, but sadly unavoidable. 2 Ever wondered how a camera works? 3 Mad old duffers at the University – nothing new then!

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:

Colourful but flat 6

■ GAMEPLAY:

Alarmingly confusing 6

■ SOUND:

Reams of crisp speech 8

■ PRESENTATION:

Brief cartoon intro 4

■ LIFESPAN:

Will keep you up at night 8

■ ORIGINALITY:

First for the PlayStation 7

Discworld is a strange one for the PlayStation and won't appeal to everyone. It's difficult, in a frustrating sense, but at least you won't finish it in one sitting.

7

out of 10



1 Aargh! Where've me legs gone? 2 Sorry, but this picture defies description. 3 Rayman gleefully flies back to safety thanks to his rapidly rotating hairpiece. 4 Realising he has no limbs, Rayman collapses in a heap. 5 No! Taking pills isn't big or clever.

Rayman

Prepare for a hefty dose of **unparalleled cuteness**
with this, UbiSoft's **kaleidoscopic new** platform game



The introductory sequence to *Rayman* seems to involve some sleepy little village, a dastardly deed-doer and locking people up in tiny cages. Hold on... sleepy village... tiny cages... surely this is a thinly-veiled allegory for Future Publishing where *PSM* is made? Yes! And there's the editor lazing in his hammock, while the team slave away. The injustice!



This will probably go down in the history books as the brightest platform game ever, as platform games go. It certainly wins in the 'twee' stakes, that's for sure. The lead character is so sickeningly bouncy that a good measure of Milk Of Magnesia is needed to quash the nauseous stirrings in the pits of your stomach, while the backgrounds are ablaze with just about every colour imaginable.

But beware Rayman's gentle exterior: just because it's cute and happens to have a scary penchant for pink, don't go dismissing this as a game for wimps. On the contrary, this is one of the toughest platform games we've stumbled across, with some 70 stages to bound through and clumsy collision detection to battle against.

As far as the gameplay goes, this is your typical run-jump-swing-jump-punch-die affair. There's nothing out of the ordinary in that respect. It's got all the usual trademarks of a successful platform game as dictated by the likes of the most recent classic examples – Sega's *Sonic* and Nintendo's *Mario World*. There are platforms and ledges aplenty, a mind-boggling wealth of enemies to trounce,

vast weaving level designs to explore, and untold secret areas to uncover... In fact the whole episode shows uncanny resemblance to a superb but simple Super Nintendo platformer entitled *Mickey Mouse*. A staggering number of ideas evident in *Rayman* are straight copies of features seen in said SNES game, including some of the attack formations demonstrated by a couple of the bosses. That's originality for you.

Perhaps the most irritating aspect of *Rayman*, though, is severe lack of speed. Instead of bounding around like a hyperactive four-year-old child, this laboriously waddles like a heavily pregnant woman. Fluid and smooth in its scrolling, *Rayman* can't be faulted in this department; it's just a shame that you can't whack a turbo on to Rayman's backside to



Instead of bounding around like a

hyperactive four-year-old child, this
laboriously waddles like a
heavily pregnant woman



■ PUBLISHER: UbiSoft ■ DEVELOPER: In-house

■ RELEASE DATE: Out now ■ ORIGIN: France

■ PRICE: £39.99 ■ STYLE: Platform



give him some 'oompf'. And possibly some 'welly' to boot. The real eye-opener comes in the guise of the presentation. This really is slick. *Rayman* is dripping with quirky animations, lavish backdrops, a swish cartoon-based intro sequence, and some novel manoeuvres from the bandy-legged hero himself – well, if he had any legs that is. Rayman has no limbs; no arms, no legs and no neck. But he does have an annoyingly cute head, huge white-gloved hands, and trainer-enclosed feet. This disability actually benefits the loveable lump immensely, enabling him to extend his clenched fist in telescopic fashion to blatt any opposition out of the way.

Furthermore he has this incredible syrup of figs which can imitate a helicopter admirably, whisking him up to those hard-to-reach nooks and crannies.

As for the basics, you have between three and five health points and can accumulate numerous lives during your travels. Furthermore there are substantial continues of which to take advantage, as well as a Memory Card option and a somewhat unfriendly password system. So there's plenty of scope for steaming through the game at quite a considerable rate. Refreshingly *Rayman* also has a non-linear game structure, evident in the ability to choose different routes around the stages through the use of a map screen.

Despite being one of the more interesting platform

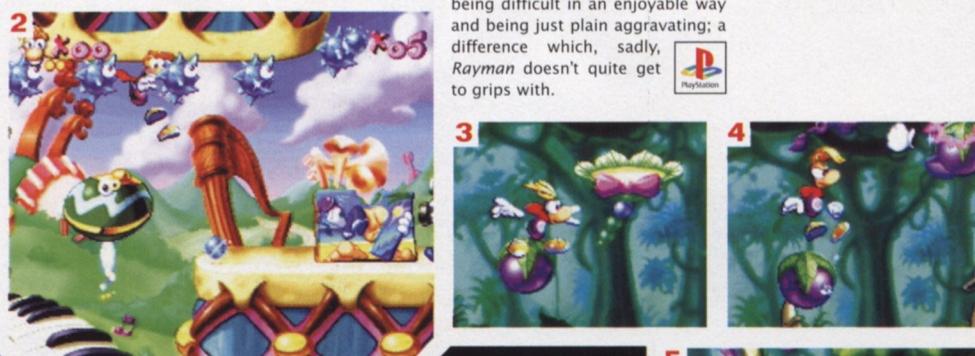
games to emerge, it certainly won't win any awards for being the most playable. The controls feel unresponsive at times and the sluggishness of actions – such as throwing a punch – proves detrimental to your success, as the enemy responds quicker than you can power up and attack. Moreover, the aforementioned collision detection only succeeds in annoying, with leaps of faith requiring pixel-perfect precision before you can get out of the manoeuvre in one piece.

What's more, *Rayman* is inexcusably devoid of a 'run' option. Pathetic. If you're in a tricky situation you want to get out of it as quickly as possible, not stroll by with time to scratch your bum. One of the things that made *Sonic* and *Mario* so hugely successful was the unrestrained speed of which both games were capable at times; you'd see players being driven into an uncontrollable frenzy, struggling with the joypad in a tireless and vain attempt to keep their little sprites alive. It's this brash action of which *Rayman* is completely devoid. *Rayman* simply generates very little desperation or sense of immediacy.

As a whole it is fun to play but extremely unforgiving, with little margin for error when bounding between the platforms and ledges. There's a difference between a game being difficult in an enjoyable way and being just plain aggravating; a difference which, sadly, *Rayman* doesn't quite get to grips with.



1) This is what happens when you drink Fairy Liquid and then start jumping about. 2) What's foreground hazard and background detail? Difficult to tell, a downfall that makes the gameplay infuriating. 3) Look mum, I'm an aeroplane. 4) Look mum, I'm an annoying runt. 5) Rayman's friends can't stand his continual smirking and refuse to answer the door. 6) Crazy, man. A dragon made from almonds and a spiky red walnut. With a goatee. 7) Ah, the blissful ignorance of a videogame character. Git.



VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:

Cute and colourful 8

■ GAMEPLAY:

...But mightily frustrating 6

Fantastic to look at, challenging to play, quirky and cute – it has

■ SOUND:

Grating spot effects 5

■ PRESENTATION:

Slick and polished 8

the makings of a perfect game. If

■ LIFESPAN:

Mightily hard... 8

■ ORIGINALITY:

Are you kidding? 3

only it wasn't so damn clumsy and frustrating.



■ PUBLISHER:
■ RELEASE DATE:
■ PRICE:

Acclaim
Out now
£39.99

■ DEVELOPER:
■ ORIGIN:
■ STYLE:

Capcom
United States

Beat 'em up

Street Fighter: The Movie

A hardy perennial of the beat 'em up genre, but can the latest incarnation of *Street Fighter* kick it?



1) Don't be fooled by the impressive looking screenshots. 2) Bison launches into a full-on blue-flame pounce. Ken takes a step back. 3) Now there's a special pyjama manoeuvre. [Inset] 'Hey, what about me and the bloke on fire?'



oncentrate, please. *Street Fighter: The Movie* is the game of the film based on the characters from the fifth version of the game; though there have been countless other interpretations since. Gadzooks! Got that?

Street Fighter is one of the most legendary computer games in the history of all things byte and beautiful. Your grandmother has perfected Chun-Li's special attacks, nephew Robin easily cracked Cammy's cross-scissors pressure hold – though Aunt Barbie has yet to discover the delights of Ken's special manoeuvres. It's quite literally a phenomenal world-wide phenomenon. There are even professional *Street Fighter* players – folk who make a living from tapping the old pad.

So it comes as no surprise that *Street Fighter* is making an early PlayStation appearance. *The Movie* is basically a faithful conversion of the recent successful coin-op, though after repeated exposure to the game one wonders quite why the arcade machine should attract so many pieces of silver. One wouldn't be so bold as to suggest that *Street Fighter: The Movie* is challenging for the mantle of worst beat 'em up around; only the reputation of the title is such that when something this stodgy turns up, you cannot help but wonder where it all went wrong.

It's like this. For starters, the game looks poor. The digitised pictures are ridiculous, the backgrounds appalling and General Bison's red leather outfit surely an arrestable offence. Head to head against the gorgeous 3D Toshinden (bounce back to page 62 if it's

passed you by), *Street Fighter* makes not a smudge in the mustard. And *Street Fighter*'s fabled playability seems to have temporarily deserted the ship. Yes, all the moves are here, together with new special attacks and combo finish moves, but the all important 'feel' has gone. Done a runner. Vanished. Whoosh. You could catch a bus in the time it takes between initiating and watching the moves on screen. Okay, slight exaggeration but it ain't what it used to be like in the good old days. The whole affair is ridiculously ponderous and rather tawdry.

Of course, it will probably sell by the truckload. The cinematic sequences, and the Movie Battle mode in which you follow the storyline and choose who and where to fight are ingredients which are bound to find favour with the committed. But why not hold on to your projectiles and hang on for *Tekken*, due in a few weeks time? *Street Fighter: The Movie* is average, and we expect better.



Putting his sprouting abilities to good use, Ken helped restore Shadaloo City



1) Ah, so this is the spinning pile drive. Nasty. 2) Gasp in awe at the super combo finish. 3) Is Kylie launching a kick or taking a shove?

VERDICT

- GRAPHICS:
- SOUND:
- LIFESPAN:

- In a word, tacky 5
- Ooh, aah, and tunes 5
- Depends on ability 6

- GAMEPLAY: The bones of a good game 6
- PRESENTATION: Cine bits are okay 6
- ORIGINALITY: An ageing beat 'em up 5

The might of the *Street Fighter* name isn't enough to save *The Movie* from being an also-ran in the beat 'em stakes. The moves are here but the 'feel' has gone.

■ PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts ■ DEVELOPER: Bullfrog
 ■ RELEASE DATE: Early November ■ ORIGIN: UK
 ■ PRICE: £44.99 ■ STYLE: Management strategy



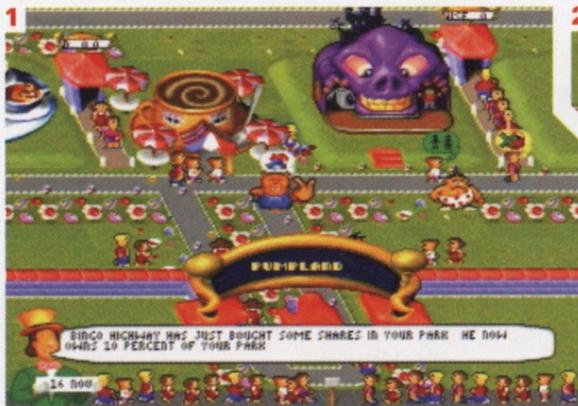
Play Test



The rendered intro to *Theme Park* is actually rather entertaining. A family is whisked off to try out some rides by a rather evil looking ringmaster. And that's their dog.

Theme Park

Yikes, it's **capitalism**, but not as we know it. Colourful yet **cunning**, the empire strikes back in Bullfrog's **business** management sim



1 Who on earth is Bingo Highway. And how come he bought shares in my little Pumpland? Beware, this isn't just a walk in the park. Hostile outsiders buy in. 2 The outside view of the park's latest ride and 3 check out the feature that lets you actually see what the ride is like.



1 Can you afford to spend money on the latest attractions? 2 Are you paying close attention to the happiness of your customers? 3 Can you afford a bag of chips?

It's a real roller-coaster of a... no, no, no. It's swings and roundabouts... NO. It's an intricate portrait of economic consumerism in a micro-capitalist Utopia... aaarrgggh. Oh custard, look, *Theme Park* is a computer game in which you build rides and put bogs and burger stands up and stuff; and people come and visit the park and give you money which you reinvest in more rides, bogs and burger stands. And so it goes on...

You can pick up the joypad, follow the helpful on-screen hints and build your own leisure complex in tens of minutes. Only when you realise that each of the visitors to your Alton Towers-wannabe is a hugely complex little blighter with wants and needs; that rides, attractions, food stalls, toilets and the like need to be placed with military precision – do you begin to understand the scale of Bullfrog's fine game.

So, what's to do? The aim is simply to build a theme park, then continually improve the facilities, ensuring that it's carefully maintained in the process. You start with a bit of cash, choose a country around the world in which to begin your empire construction and then splat paths, parks, rides and amenities across green acres with liberal abandon. You're only learning, of course, and it isn't long before you realise that such parkfoolery is the direct route to bankruptcy. Computer games thankfully let you try again without so much as a bail remand.

The range of visitors is such that you can't just concentrate on one facet of a theme park. Old folk want to wander around ornate gardens with lakes and

mumble about how pretty the flowers are and who on earth dropped that crisp packet in front of the brass band – that's what they do – while yer average youngster likes his cheeks to flap on a roller-coaster. *Theme Park* is life. And life isn't easy (unless you get paid to play computer games, heh, heh, heh). Most early jaunts end in abject misery as you overspend, with folk showing a marked reluctance to enter the gates of your pleasure palace.

And behind the colourful cartoon graphics lies an intense business simulation. This isn't just about roller-coasters, it's about spreadsheets and stocktaking and staff management. It's about dropping more salt on the chips, making certain your guests get thirsty and buy that expensive Cola from the shop which you so cunningly placed next to the fast food stand. As a business simulation *Theme Park* is more accessible than most, though some may tire of the incessant figure-juggling.

Patience and application are the watchwords. Now go build your empire... We're off to the pub.



1 Too much caffeine and things get bizarre. 2 Surreal visuals, huh? 3 The icons – heck, these captions aren't funny – are easy to follow.



8 out of 10

Round-up

Ultimate Parodius Deluxe

■ PUBLISHER:	Konami
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now
■ PRICE:	£39.99
■ DEVELOPER:	In-house
■ ORIGIN:	Japan
■ STYLE:	Side-scrolling shoot 'em up

And lo, into the valley of coin-ops came *Nemesis* (that went by the name of *Gradius* in distant lands). And *Nemesis* begat a sequel, and its sequel thus begat another. And from the East came a parody of *Nemesis* and it was called *Parodius*, which is only slightly clever, and we saw that it was good. Well, quite good, anyway.

Parodius is the culmination of over ten years of sideways-scrolling shooters, and this PlayStation offering is the apex of that culmination. The single CD includes both standard *Parodius* plus *Fantastic Journey* which is a souped-up *Parodius* running in hi-res mode (a feat of programming, according to sources in the know).

Both games stick to the well-trod shoot 'em up path, but feature mad graphics. As well as a spaceship, you can fly a pig with wings and halo; a pink octopus; a stick-man on a paper plane... and the in-game scenery is even more worrying. Giant cat-ships, an enormous parrot (you have to shoot his swollen belly-button), a massive dancer who shuffles, most unladylike, across the screen. Gun emplacements are clowns, enemy ships are birds, walls are made of cake... and on it goes, all to the tune of judiciously jazzed-up classical music. This is *not* a serious game.

But for all their weird and wonderful visuals, *Parodius*



Parodius' Fantastic Journey is more of a descent into madness: (1) This vast mermaid gives you a dousing with her tail. Alternatively she laughs at you. No, literally: she ejects 'Ho Ho Ho' words across the screen. (2) An equally gigantic panda in a tutu cops a bellyful. (3) And here you meet a pirate ship which is a cat. In a hat. Or a floating cat disguised as a pirate ship. Uh, whatever...

and *Fantastic Journey* are still side-scrolling shoot 'em ups – and not terribly 32-bit ones at that. Varying difficulty levels, continuities and a non-stop two-player mode mean that you can see all that they have to offer in a relatively short time.

The gameplay hasn't progressed much since the original and the novelty of the utter craziness of it all soon wears off to leave a standard 2D blast-fest. New converts to the cause should enjoy it, but regular coin-op abusers may wonder what all the fuss is about.



Standard Parodius: (1) Clowns with bubbles coming out of their hats. (2) A giant lady who has, um, lost her horse. Look, we told you this game wasn't to be taken seriously.



VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Pretty weird 7	■ GAMEPLAY:	Classic shooting fare 8
■ SOUND:	Hooked On Classics 6	■ PRESENTATION:	Lots of options 7
■ LIFESPAN:	Surprisingly short 4	■ ORIGINALITY:	Pics, yes. Play, no 5

Mad Japanese blasting fare – not to everyone's tastes but still a high-octane shoot 'em up. Enjoyable for a while, but the predictable action soon pales.

6
out of 10

Total Eclipse



[1] Another bloody dreary grey tunnel. [2] These green lasery things speed up your ship, so - novel plot twist - you're forced to press the 'decelerate' button.

■ PUBLISHER:	Crystal Dynamics
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now
■ PRICE:	£39.99
■ DEVELOPER:	In-house
■ ORIGIN:	US
■ STYLE:	3D shoot 'em up

Fearsome alien race storms into planetary system and implodes central star. Similar fate to befall our sun if something is not done. Rather than send in an entire fleet of ships, we send one with you in it. Hmm...

Shoot 'em up *Total Eclipse* flings you manfully across planet surfaces and into enemy-held tunnels on a trail of alien destruction. Apart from the blissful graphics, it's a bit pre... dictable. Surface, tunnel, surface, tunnel, surface, tunnel, boss.

When the game came out on 3DO - a full two years ago - it received a mixed reception. Luscious though the visuals were, the gameplay left a lot to be desired. The collision detection was a bit iffy and when you fired missiles, the

screen filled with glowing globules, making it very hard to tell whether you were hitting something or not. Generally, you weren't.

So when Crystal Dynamics announced an enhanced, tweaked, and all-round better version for the PlayStation, well obviously we were interested. Sadly, Crystal Dynamics' definition of the word 'enhanced' would appear to be completely different to our interpretation. The craft still handles like a rear-ended VW, the collision detection in the tunnels is only mildly improved and, God knows how, they've managed to make the PlayStation version jerky! The main improvement is that the game now has a password system, so you can mercifully bypass the earlier stages once you've completed them.

However, with all the comments that have been made about the game, plus a whole two years to refine it, you'd have expected better than this. If it's a shallow and infuriating shooter you're a-lusting for, here it be.



[1] Swirly tunnel vision. [2] A big alien ship gets shot at. [3] The enemy fighters are shaped so that your missiles go right through them.

The Official PlayStation Magazine

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Impressive landscapes 7	■ GAMEPLAY:	Shoot things, avoid stuff 5
■ SOUND:	Dreadful US techno-rock 4	■ PRESENTATION:	Slick intro and options 7
■ LIFESPAN:	Save games 6	■ ORIGINALITY:	It was - two years ago 5

This had all the ingredients of a real classic: impressive imagery, full-on blasting action, and loads of levels. Unfortunately it came out half-baked and lacking spice.

5
out of 10

Kileak The Blood



■ PUBLISHER:	SCE
■ RELEASE DATE:	Out now
■ PRICE:	£39.99
■ DEVELOPER:	Genki Co Ltd
■ ORIGIN:	Japan
■ STYLE:	3D maze blaster

The 3D stroll-around-and-shoot-things PC game *Doom* has a lot to answer for. Not least of which is this plain-Jane arcade blaster. To cut a long story short, you are the pilot of a clangy great armoured power-suit, on a mission to destroy the usual alien menace (what is it with aliens - don't they have hobbies or anything?).

Like *Doom*, the action all takes place from your suit's eye-view within the confines of a series of corridors and rooms. But unlike *Doom*, there are no stairs or windows to break up the monotony, fewer and less interesting assailants to defeat, and bugger-all in the way of excitement or, indeed, lasting interest. It's sort of annoying, since

what's there is quite good: the 3D environment is smooth and detailed, the enemies (real 3D shapes not flat 2D sprites) are suitably menacing, and there's a moody atmosphere pervading the whole affair. A stunning rendered intro and cut-scenes add to the ambience, but the shallow (like, not even ankle-deep) gameplay lets it all down.

Apart from the odd puzzle (pull switch, open door), it's a case of wandering through every bleak corridor and into every bland room, shooting anything that gets in your way and catching the elevator down to the next level which - apart from the change in wallpaper, mood lighting and layout - is the same as the one upstairs. One of the PSM team actually had the mindless resolve to complete *Kileak* and so we can genuinely say, don't bother. The ending's good, but the journey's far too dull.



The star of *Kileak* - your robotic armoured exoskeleton. If only the game played as good as it looks.



As you can see, your hosts' choice of decor isn't exactly Habitat warm 'n' cosy...

Full-motion video is used extensively for intros, outros and at points within the game.

VERDICT

■ GRAPHICS:	Steely grey 6	■ GAMEPLAY:	Uninspired 5
■ SOUND:	Brian Eno on Valium 4	■ PRESENTATION:	Awesome intro/outro 8
■ LIFESPAN:	Perilously short 3	■ ORIGINALITY:	Doom without knobs 5

A game of two halves: commendable graphics and ambience, but lacking any of the variety, exhilaration or appeal of its inspiration. In short, duff.

The Official PlayStation Magazine

4
out of 10



The **Edge** 1996 Hardware **Guide**

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Welcome to the part of the magazine where you get to say your piece. Our letters page is an open forum for all manner of discourse. We'll do our best to answer questions, raise hopes, allay fears or simply make stuff up as we see fit

F

or this first issue of *PSM*, we actually have some genuine letters from people on the Internet. Future Publishing's World Wide Web site posted information about the magazine and asked for replies. What follows is a brief selection from the many we received...

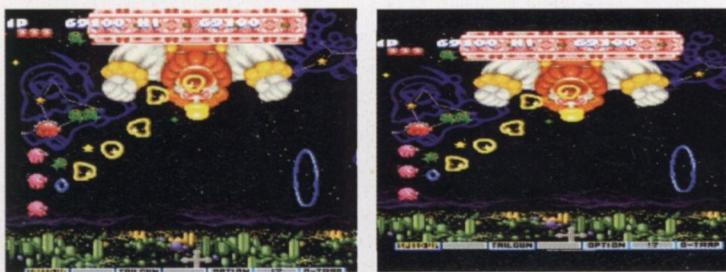
And another thing...

Sounds like it's going to be an interesting magazine. I think the idea of a 'sampler' CD on *PSM*'s cover is excellent, though I'd prefer it to contain playable rather than static demos. You can tell so much more from playing the game for a few minutes – the rolling demos are useless in deciding whether or not a game is worth buying. Also it would be worthwhile filling up the disk with any interesting graphics demos – there must be plenty of these.

A beneficial piece of information to include in the review of any PlayStation game will be to state if it runs in full-screen PAL or if it's just a letterboxed version of the NTSC game. I also think that a feature on how to connect your console to your TV to obtain the best picture quality may be helpful. There are



The difference between NTSC (l) and PAL (r) displays is in the borders, reckons **Martyn Iles**. But as time goes on the PAL borders will disappear, says *PSM*.



numerous debates on whether RGB/Composite Video/S-VHS is better (obviously RF isn't any good!) and it would be good to have an objective view on the matter.

Finally, how about updating the Web page with any games which have been confirmed by Sony for release with the PlayStation – or just after. It's almost impossible to find out from other sources, as the publishing dates for games can vary so much.

Martyn Iles,
mji@mfltd.co.uk

Crivens – that raises a few issues. For starters, our Demo Disc will be featuring a variety of loveliness, with non-playable demos as well as playable ones. Despite what you say, rolling demos are useful to see how a game looks and moves in realtime, and can help your buying decisions – especially in conjunction with our finely hand-crafted reviews.

We won't be harping on about the PAL vs NTSC debate as, very quickly, you'll find most PAL games running full (or pretty full) screen anyway. But we do have loads of PlayStation-related features lined up, including one on the smartest TVs and how best to connect up your PlayStation, so stay tuned.

Our World Wide Web site

(<http://www.futurenet.co.uk>) will have loads of information posted there, including release dates and prices of software. But rest assured, *PSM* will keep you informed on new games and their (notoriously unreliable) release dates.

One for all

The one thing that concerns me about your new magazine is the 'Official' part of its title. Previously, Future Publishing magazines have supported both home machine owners and imported machine owners: does this official mag see a reversal in this policy?

I think it's important that you cater for all owners of the PlayStation and don't become like the official Nintendo magazine with its scaremongering – such as 'adapters blow up your SNES'.

Good luck with the mag!

Mark, a proud import owner

The one major difference with the PlayStation is that Sony will be trying very hard to have simultaneous releases of major titles in Japan, Europe and the US. So the only games you'll be missing out on are obscure Japanese horse-racing titles and Pachinko simulations. We'll be reporting on the latest game developments from Japan and the US but, obviously, our priorities lie with the hundreds of thousands of people who'll be buying PAL machines.

No comment!

Things we'd like you to say...

The state of gameplay: are these damn games any fun to play. Are you getting your money's worth?

Are our reviews right? We'd like to know if you agree or, perish the thought, disagree with our ratings.

Things we'd rather you didn't...

My Saturn/Jaguar/3DO/Nintendo is/aren't as good as PlayStation. 1) We don't care; 2) neither does anyone else.

Will so-and-so game appear on the PlayStation? Don't worry, we'll tell you when stuff is coming out.

Will this Japanese/US game work on my PAL PlayStation? No it won't – don't ask.

Which is best MK3 or SFII? Etc... Aargh!

title that's exclusively PlayStation orientated. Fingers crossed, we'll be able to get it overseas.

Wai Siew,
jwsiew@hk.super.net

Hope no more: you can order the mag direct from Future Publishing – see the subscriptions offer on page 44.

Tell it straight

You asked for feedback, so here it is.

All I want from games magazines is news and reviews – tips and cheats are of secondary importance.

Please make the layout clear. I can't stand magazines where the text is printed in lots of directions and lots of different colours over complicated pictures. It makes for a very confusing

Letters

E-mail psm@futurenet.co.uk World Wide Web site <http://www.futurenet.co.uk>

read. For example, *Edge* and some of your opposition is good; *Ultimate Future Games* and various rivals aren't.

Don't spend too much time railing against other machines. The sort of people who buy a PlayStation (and also your magazine) are likely to be older and more affluent, and probably also own a Saturn/Jaguar/3DO/Ultra64. In other words, you will be mocking your own readers. After all, if I want to get involved in 'my machine's better than yours' crap, I can do it right here on the bullsh-[expletive deleted – we think he means the Internet].

Ross Mitchell

Ross.Mitchell.SBD-E@rx.xerox.com

We're of a similar mind: *PSM* will feature playing tips and cheats, but we'll be restricting them to just a few pages each issue. If reader demand is strong, we'll maybe do some of the bigger players' guides as supplements, and we can also put tips up on Futurenet.

Clear layout? None clearer, Ross. We don't believe in using enormous pieces of artwork from packaging or rendered intros: you need screenshots of the games, and that's what we give you.

We don't actually care very much about other machines – we're PlayStation addicts every last one of us. Although, to be honest, there will be precious few readers affluent enough to afford several games machines.

Honest scores

Surely it's time for a rethink on the ridiculously outdated scoring system used in videogames magazines. For years it seems that an average game has been receiving upwards of 70 per cent. I mean half the time the reviewer will say that a game is 'distinctly average', then mark it at 73 per cent. I'd have been bloody pleased to have got such an 'average' mark in my exams.

So come on, how about a 50 per cent score for an average game? Is it the industry hiding behind the scores, or are reviewers too scared to put themselves on the line? I think we should be told.

**J Soames,
Hull**

This is just the sort of quandary we found ourselves in when designing the magazine. At first we thought about doing percentage ratings, but later decided against it. No scoring system is that accurate; and rating videogames is a far from scientific endeavour anyway. Instead we settled upon a mark out



Ansell James hopes *Tekken 2* (above) will kick *Tekken 1* ass. The coin-op does – but it ain't on PlayStation yet.

of ten, with – oddly enough – average games being rewarded with a five. We'll be trying very hard to make sure that our ratings are as reliable and dependable as possible. Good games get high marks; average ones get average marks; the rest get a right kicking. After all, it's your money that's at stake here.

For the full low-down, check out our full reviewing policy on page 18.

A superior machine

I'll certainly be rushing straight down to my newsagents to grab a copy of *The Official PlayStation Magazine*. Hopefully you'll be running a competition to win one of these superb machines, as although I have a Sega Saturn I'd still love to own a Sony PlayStation. After all, both machines have their good points and bad points – it really depends on what you're looking for. I'd like *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Daytona* – but I'd also like *Tekken*, *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer* for the PlayStation.

Personally I think the PlayStation is the better machine, and I look forward to getting one some day – by hook or crook.

**Paul Shotton,
Stoke-on-Trent**

Can't say we'll be giving away too many PlayStations, but we do have a rather sexy TV up for grabs this issue. Check it out on pages 48/49.

Talking to the masters

It's good to see that the PlayStation is getting the kind of attention it deserves.

I hope there'll be plenty of interviews with the Japanese developers – after all, they make up the most important factor

in the success of the machine. Also it would be useful to read features on different games companies – including a list of their entire games catalogues – as well as interviews with the R&D leaders and the coders – the real people behind the software.

**Thomas Puha,
(RiOT/BARRIER)**

To be honest, there is so much PlayStation stuff to cover (there are around 80 games mentioned in this issue alone), we'll be hard pushed to do everything that everyone wants. However, *PSM* is very keen to feature developers from all over the world, so when we have a bit more room, we'll be speaking directly to the likes of Namco, Capcom, Warp, Genki, Konami, Tonkin House, Seibu Kaihatsu, etc. And, of course, Sony of Japan.

Impressive things in store

Isn't it a bummer that such a fine machine as the PlayStation will never get *Virtua Fighter 2*? It's the only reason to buy a Sega Saturn!

I hope *Tekken 2* kicks major ass over *Tekken 1*. Have you seen what *Syndicate Wars* looks like on the PlayStation? What awesome games, besides the Sony ones, have you seen in action?

**Ansell Christopher James,
jca23@uow.edu.au**

Surely it's more of a bummer that Saturn doesn't have *Wipeout*, *Ridge Racer*, *Tekken*, *Jumping Flash*, etc. The coin-op version of *Tekken 2* is phenomenal, but *Tekken 1* still takes some beating – and you'll be able to buy it in a few weeks time. *Syndicate Wars* is looking very nice

indeed and, given the quality of the gameplay, this should be a killer title. We've seen some pretty amazing PlayStation titles – behind closed doors, of course. Don't worry, we'll fill you in as soon as we can.

What's there to celebrate?

So the PlayStation has finally been released in the UK – but isn't it just possible that we're seeing the best software for the machine in the first months of its existence?

Games like the admittedly gorgeous *Ridge Racer* have been in progress for some two years because companies like Namco can afford to spend time on them. How many other companies will go to such lengths to produce top-quality games when no one knows where the market will be in two years time?

And isn't it also the case that *Ridge Racer*, *Tekken* et al, may well be about as good as it gets? Sure, we can expect some *Doom*-clones, the slightly-remodelled beat 'em ups like *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat*, but where's the innovation? Where's the gob-smacking next-generation software coming from? I'm not convinced that we'll be seeing anything significantly better than what you can get for the Super NES.

**Brad Essley,
Leeds**

The PlayStation is designed so that programmers can create impressive visual effects easily. In fact it's no secret that *Ridge Racer* was written using Sony's own graphics libraries in just six or seven months. So to suggest that we've seen the best from the machine already, is a bit premature. Certainly the graphics will improve – already we've seen games in production that wipe the floor with many of the 'first generation titles'.

With a machine as powerful as PlayStation, coders can concentrate on gameplay, and let the hardware do the fancy stuff. Hopefully, before long we'll be seeing titles with the graphic excellence of *Wipeout*, *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer* but with enhanced gameplay to match.

Controversy corner

Every month, we ask a

question/make a controversial

statement and invite you

to respond

spectacular, cinematic, rendered intros to games are a complete waste of time and money. They waste programmers' time, softcos' and gamers' money and should be abolished forthwith. Intros don't add anything to the game itself and you only ever watch them twice. Perhaps the softcos feel that with the development of the PlayStation, we gamers expect such finery. Nonsense. Spend your time concentrating on making better games.

We invite your comments.



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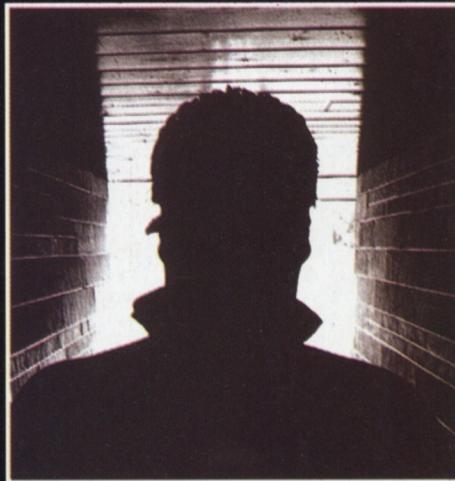
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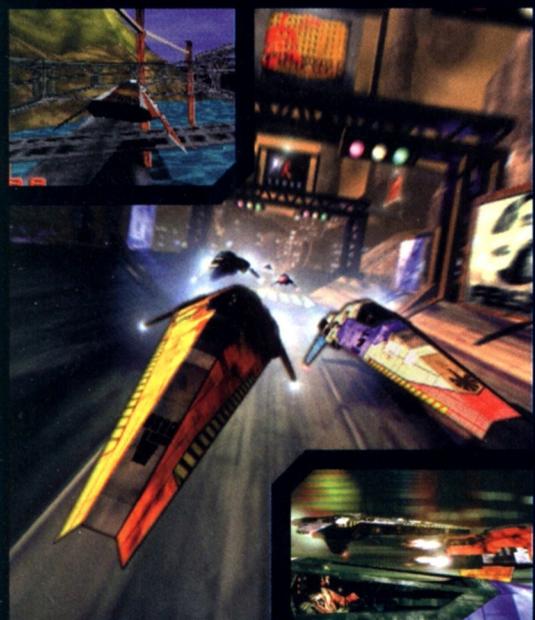
CDs are a good thing. They're small, thin and easy to carry

An auspicious moment: for the first time ever a console magazine can provide unique hands-on

around. They can hold music, pictures and software. And,

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if you want, you can tape them to the front of a magazine...



Wipeout

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.
■ STYLE: Racing
■ PROGRAM: Rolling demo

Although *Ridge Racer* has championed the racing game genre for some time, along comes *Wipeout* to challenge that might. It is one of the most frenetic and challenging racing games yet, and is exhilarating to the very last lap. In fact since we acquired it we haven't been able to stop playing it here in the *PSM* office, and poor old *Ridge* has found itself languishing in the Editor's drawer for a couple of weeks.

But why's it so good? Plenty of courses to rocket round are an obvious bonus, along with the competitive intelligence of the computer players. Then there's the sheer speed of the thing, gracefully fluid with intuitive controls and authentic handling. Basically it's good fun! But you can see this for yourself with *PSM*'s free-rolling demo, one which boasts a brand new level to the one featured on the demo disc packaged with your spanking new UK PlayStation.

■ Additional Features
Although there are snippets featured here, the full version of *Wipeout* will boast an extensive soundtrack by dance oriented artists such as Leftfield, Orbital and The Chemical Brothers. Furthermore, under the Epic record label SIE is releasing an audio CD for *Wipeout*, crammed with tracks from the game as well as some other commercial dance material. This is due to coincide with the release of the game.

■ Further Information
Wipeout gets major review treatment in this first issue of *PSM*, being exhaustively examined in a massive four-page PlayTest commencing on page 58.

Krazy Ivan

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.
■ STYLE: 3D shoot 'em up
■ PROGRAM: Video sequence

This demo is just a taster of some of the graphics and action that you'll see in the full version of the game. You will witness the outstanding rendered intro sequence which has been generated to set the scene for *Krazy Ivan's* compelling plot. Never before have you seen computer generated graphics look so lifelike, or full-motion video look so crisp. So watch in awe as the demo unfurls, then slaver in anticipation for the end of November when *Krazy Ivan* is scheduled to hit the streets.

■ Additional Features
Krazy Ivan is a raging 3D shoot 'em up similar in style to a recently released PC game called *Mech Warrior*. This involves stomping around vast texture mapped terrains in a huge robotic vehicle while blasting crap out of similarly large robotic war-machines.

■ Further Information
Krazy Ivan is scheduled to slot into *PSM*'s PlayTest section next month.

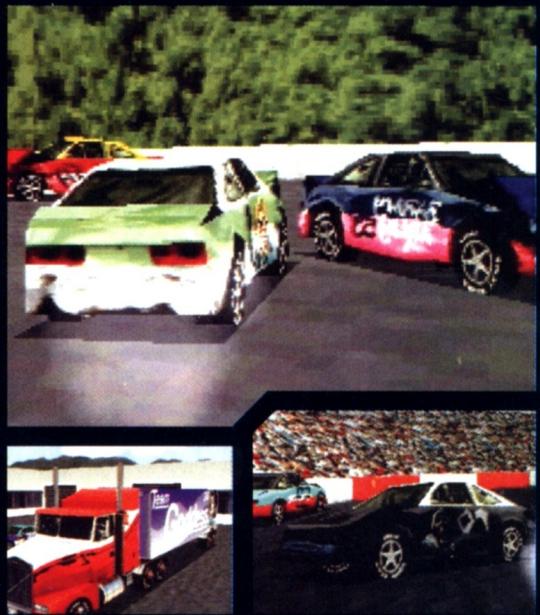


Assault Rigs

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.
■ STYLE: 3D tank game
■ PROGRAM: Video sequence

With *Assault Rigs*, SIE has plumbed the depths of gaming heritage to give us a sort of *Battlezone* indoors. Anyway, sit back and soak up the intro and a variety of screenshots from the game.

■ Further Information
There'll be more on *Assault Rigs* next month when we take it apart, *PSM*-style.



Destruction Derby

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.
■ STYLE: Racing
■ PROGRAM: Rolling demo

Another new racing game to cast your beady eyes over is the manic *Destruction Derby*, also from SIE. This time, though, the driving action takes on a more malicious feel as you find yourself thrust into the heady bump 'n' grind world of stock car racing. Here, anything goes. If you can push that accelerator button then you'll do absolutely fine! This really is a complete free-for-all as you speed round devious courses, rebound off the walls, ram someone from behind to get them out of your way, or just drive plain dirty. All you have to worry about is winning – nothing else matters – and you can use almost any tactic you like to get across that finish line first.

Again, you will have seen *Destruction Derby* on the Demo Disc packaged with your UK PlayStation, but *PSM* is dangling another carrot in front of your nose with this all-new sequence. So strap yourselves down and prepare for a really wild ride...

■ Additional Features
Destruction Derby doesn't just consist of generic track-based racing action. In addition to the normal fare you also have the opportunity to race in The Bowl, a circular arena where every other driver is homed in on you – is there any escape? The idea is to stay alive for as long as possible by executing some fancy driving skills to stay out of their way. Not easy!

■ Further Information
Destruction Derby goes under the magnifying glass in *PSM*'s PlayTest section this month, starting on page 66.

On the CD



Blocker



Turner



Bomber



Builder



Basher



Miner



Digger



Climber



Floater

Discworld

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.

■ STYLE: Adventure

■ PROGRAM: Playable demo

Based upon the acclaimed *Discworld* series of books by noted author Terry Pratchett, this 32-bit incarnation comes in the guise of a humorous point-and-click adventure. It sees you playing the part of inept wizard Rincewind who sets off to save Discworld's capital city of Ankh Morpork from a rampaging Dragon.

This demo is only a minute portion of the full game, but it will still take you about 20 minutes to finish, if you put your mind to it.

Controls

Using the joypad (or mouse) move the direction pad to control the on-screen cursor. Then, to make any action on one of the 'hot-spots' (subtitles appear when you find an interactive location), use the buttons below:

Action, such as pick up an object or talk to someone

Examine

■ Inventory

You have two forms of inventory in Rincewind and The Luggage. Rincewind himself can only carry a couple of items in his pockets but the Luggage can carry anything and everything, so make good use of it.

■ Map Screen

The map screen allows you to access any location within Ankh Morpork in an instant.

■ Dialogue

Conversation is more often than not automatic, with the discourse going backwards and forwards between Rincewind and whoever. However there will be times when you can 'steer' the dialogue in a particular direction by opting for a 'tone', such as sarcasm, wit, or basic questioning. An icon bar will appear at the top of the screen – simply make your choice and click on the desired approach.

■ Additional Features

In the full version of *Discworld* expect to find near on 100 hours of gruelling gameplay. Undoubtedly this will be going down in history as one of the toughest point and click adventures available.

■ Further Information

Discworld can be found in this month's PlayTest section of *PSM*, starting on page 82.

■ Additional Features

Fantastic texture mapped graphics, as you can see from this demo, and a quirky but cute intro sequence. There are a staggering number of levels to be found in the full version. Be prepared to be very perplexed and very tired – you'll be up all night saving these dim little buggers.

■ Further Information

Lemmings 3D finds itself examined and dissected in *PSMs* PlayTest section this month. The fun starts on page 76.

Lemmings 3D

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.

■ STYLE: Sport

■ PROGRAM: Puzzle

Lemmings have been around for ages; continually falling off cliffs, plummeting down crevices, walking blindly into swamps, all blissfully unperturbed by the possibility of ensuing death.

Although the *Lemmings* theme has become massively successful, it has been prudently noted that the old-style 2D perspective is getting a little bit dated. SIE has therefore thrust *Lemmings* into the '90s, taking on a whole new viewpoint and giving you a first-hand look at the world as a Lem would see it. Welcome to *Lemmings 3D*!

Controls

The direction pad controls the on-screen cursor and allows you to select which direction the Lemmings head in and which action they are to take (such as building steps, blocking, or digging). You can then change the camera view by using the following buttons:

Camera Left

Camera Forwards

Camera Right

Camera Backwards

L 1 Move around screen with joypad

L 2 Choose Lemming skill on left

R 1 Select (when cursor is over icon)

R 2 Choose Lemming skill on right

■ Mouse

Lemmings 3D is compatible with the PlayStation mouse and makes play infinitely swifter and a darn sight easier!

Left Button – Selects icon and selects Lemming

Right Button – Hold button down to move the camera

■ Skills

Each Lemming has a particular vocation:

Blocker – The selected Lemming stands fast, preventing other Lemmings from passing.

Turner – The selected Lemming stands fast, causing other Lemmings to turn corners.

Bomber – The selected Lemming explodes.

Builder – The selected Lemming constructs a bridge for his chums.

Basher – The selected Lemming whacks horizontally through walls, etc.

Miner – The selected Lemming digs diagonally downwards through soft material.

Digger – The selected Lemming digs vertically downwards through soft material.

Climber – The selected Lemming climbs vertical surfaces, a skill which lasts for the entirety of the level.

Floater – The selected Lemming floats safely down to the ground from a high surface, a skill which lasts for the entirety of the level.



Don't worry!
These programs are pre-production versions of finished games. If they crash (slim though the chances are) simply reset your PlayStation and reload. No harm done, eh?

Novastorm

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.
■ STYLE: Shoot 'em up
■ PROGRAM: Playable demo

First seen on the PC, SIE's graphically gorgeous shoot 'em up is about to be unleashed on to PlayStation this November, but you can get a sneaky first-hand look at what will be on offer, thanks to this hectic playable demo. *Novastorm* is a mad first-person perspective sci-fi shoot 'em up ablaze with alluring rendered back drops. The enemy onslaught is thick and unforgiving but, in typical shoot 'em up style, there are plenty of weapons for you to collect so that you can effortlessly burst through the alien barrage.

This demo shows you only a small proportion of what is to come, but we can assure you that after playing it your trigger finger will be uncontrollably itchy...

Controls

The D-Pad controls the movement of your ship. Confer with the following list for the various weapons and special options that you'll have at your disposal:

- **Primary Weapon:** Fires primary weapon. Also selects menu options
- **Smart Bomb:**
- **Fire Burst weapon:** As you collect power-ups the Burst Weapon Power Bar increases and will accordingly set off the Fire Burst weapon for a set duration

■ **Additional Features:**
The full version of the game will come on two CDs. And there'll also be a choice of three noticeably different levels of difficulty.

■ **Further Information:**
Novastorm is due to get the full lowdown in Issue 2 of *PSM*.



V-CD requires an audio CD, converting music into stunning visual effects.

V-CD

■ PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive Ent.
■ STYLE: Psychedelic graphics demo
■ PROGRAM: Rolling demo

Again, another familiar inclusion on *PSMs* demo disc will be the *V-CD* graphics demo familiar to the Sony demo packaged with UK PlayStation. You have no reason to feel cheated though. This demo is different to the one already available, in that the graphic patterns vary considerably, thus offering you more diverse and mesmerising experiences.

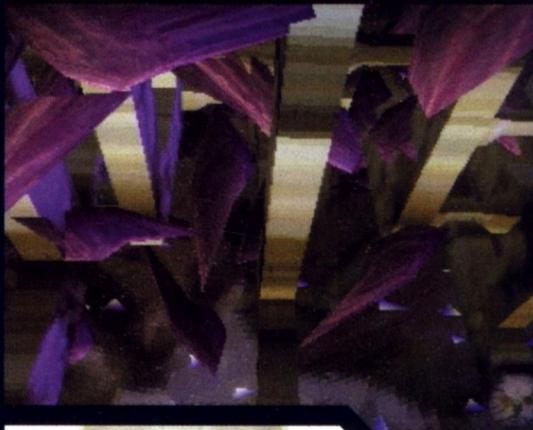
Controls

Generating freaky patterns to the pounding beat (or ambient resonance, depending on your musical preference) of your favourite CD, the *V-CD* demo is an amazing and extremely absorbing piece of software.

All you have to do is load up the demo and then, when you're so instructed, remove the demo disc and place your music CD into your PlayStation. Now let it do the rest. You can fast forward or skip tracks using the Top Left and Top Right buttons on the joypad.

■ **Additional Features:**
The longer you leave the music running the more intense the patterns become, and no pattern sequence is ever the same twice. Just don't stare at it for too long, as it can be pretty hypnotising.

■ **Further Information:**
It's more effective if you've 'been out' for the evening, beforehand.



GAMEOVER

Ridge Racer

For the final page of the magazine, as a final parting gesture-type occurrence, *PSM* will be featuring a regular section in which we reveal games' most sacred secrets. No apologies: we'll be disclosing those tricky-to-get-to endings in all their pre-rendered video sequential glory. So if you don't want to see the finale to your favourite games, turn the page quickly.

For issue 1, we didn't want to blow the

gaff on anything too major, so we're exposing the glorious end sequence from Namco's *Ridge Racer* (you should be able to experience this for yourself with the minimum of effort).

Of course, if there's a particular game that you'd like to see, why not write in to us? Or perhaps you have a last level save game stored on your memory card - we'd love to see it. The address is: *The Official*

PlayStation Magazine, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

We'll hand over a top new PlayStation game if we use your game ending, but if you're sending memory cards, please send them Recorded Delivery, package them up properly, and don't come crying to us if it gets lost in the post. We waive all responsibility for lost memory cards - you have been warned!

However, assuming we do receive them, we'll take the screenshots, write a bit of explanatory wibble and get the card right back to you by return post - along with your glittering prize. And you'll be able to bask in the glory of having your name in the magazine as well.

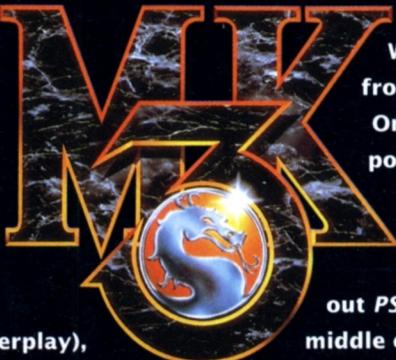
Anyway, on with the show. *Ridge Racer*'s finale - a flypast of the circuit and the cars involved...



Next month

Issue 2 of *The Official PlayStation Magazine* features a full review of the biggest beat 'em up of all time: *Mortal Kombat 3* from SCE/Williams. And we've scooped everyone else to an exclusive review of *Doom* from GT Interactive. Ha.

We'll also be rating dozens of top titles like *Tekken* (Namco), *Wing Commander III* (EA/Origin), *Loaded* (Gremlin), *Raiden* (Ocean), *Alone In The Dark 2* (Infogrames), *Descent* (Interplay),



Starblade (SCE/Namco), *Primal Rage* (Time Warner Interactive) and the glorious *Total NBA* from Sony Computer Entertainment.

On the preview front we'll be taking an early poke around *Tenka* (SIE), *Actua Soccer* and *Actua Golf* (Gremlin) plus *Darkstalkers* (Capcom).

And if you ever wondered just how all those lush 3D graphics were created, check out *PSM* number 2 - on sale sometime during the middle of November. A Thursday, most likely.



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